

## Democratization and security in Central and Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet states: 12th New Faces Conference, March 16–18, 2009, Prague, Czech Republic

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Kathrin Brockmann, David Bosold (eds.)

## Democratization and Security in Central and Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet States

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March 16–18, 2009, Prague, Czech Republic  
German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP)  
Berlin 2009



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Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Auswärtige Politik e.V.



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## Democratization and Security in Central and Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet States

12th New Faces Conference  
March 16–18, 2009, Prague, Czech Republic

a cooperation of

German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Berlin

and

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The DGAP contributes to the assessment of international developments and the discussion of these issues by providing scholarly studies and publications. The opinions expressed in these publications are those of the authors.





## Introduction

### Democratization and Security in Central and Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet States

Although Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia share the common experience of the demise of the Warsaw Pact and the fall of the former Soviet Union, the political situation in those countries today is markedly diverse. 20 years after the fall of the Berlin wall and the iron curtain, most states in Central and Eastern Europe are considered consolidated democracies and the states of ex-Yugoslavia, albeit to a different extent, have also made significant progress towards democracy in the wake of the civil wars of the 1990s. Moreover, the orange and velvet revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia have been considered a model for further democratization in post-Soviet states. Many of the aforementioned “success stories” are linked to factors such as the socializing role of the European Union and NATO. Furthermore, the Council of Europe and the OSCE have engaged in improving the human rights situation in all former Communist countries and attempted to create flexible mechanisms for assuring political stability.

Yet, these developments are contrasted by the current situation in Central Asia and the Caucasus, where democratization efforts have either stalled, not been initiated or were met by a policy of the iron fist. It is a tragic irony that the conflict between Georgia and Russia over secessionist South Ossetia in August 2008 might be considered a further illustration of how differently democracy has taken root in the area and how conflicting geopolitical agendas of various actors might affect the outcome of democracy promotion efforts and their effects for regional security.

The present volume presents the outcome of DGAP’s 12<sup>th</sup> New Faces Conference, which, through various case studies, highlights the different trajectories and processes of democratization in states of former communist rule. The papers presented at the conference in Prague analyze measures and criteria of democracies in general, successful cases of democratization and current challenges and obstacles to democratization. In addition, the contributions seek to analyze the effectiveness of various actors and their democratization efforts and extend the security-related by going beyond the democratic peace thesis. We sincerely hope that the following summaries of the presentations held in Prague will provide the reader with some fresh ideas on the complex nature and relation of democracy and security.

*David Bosold and Kathrin Brockmann*





## The Advantages of Latitude: Estonia's Post-Communist Success Story

### Paper summary

*Lucas Kello*

Estonia's geographic and ethnic proximity to the Nordic countries—one of the most stable, wealthy, and liberal regions of the world—has uniquely favored the country in its transition following the regaining of independence in 1991. Indeed few cases in post-Communist Europe demonstrate so well the potential benefits of foreign intervention in the process of democratization and free-market reform. This enquiry expounds the impact of Nordic-Estonian relations on Estonia's post-Communist transition, in particular, its pursuit of economic prosperity and physical security. At its most fundamental, the analysis considers the interplay between ideological and material factors: How Estonian policy-makers' consistent desire to return their country to the "Western" fold and, more specifically, to attain the security and development of nearby Finland and Sweden, framed the country's bold reform strategy and, in so doing, largely determined structural transfers of wealth, technology, and military assistance from the nearby Nordic states.

### Return to the West, entry to the North

The transition from foreign oppression to independence and democracy is a process by which a nation is reconciled with a conception of itself which had theretofore been suppressed or forcefully accommodated to the vision of the conquering power. The gulf between the indigenous and alien visions is all the more pronounced when, as in the case of Soviet expansionism, subjugation is premised on nothing less than the transformation of international society—and so too of the captive nation. For the Soviet occupiers of 1940 arrived on a platform not only of conquest but also of centralized denationalization; only thus can one apprehend the systematic deportations, executions, and population transfers in Estonia after 1945.

Yet a vision of Estonia independent of the will of Moscow was not fully expunged. It perdured in the private thoughts of those who remained in captivity, the majority of which rejected the Soviet identity. What was the substance of this subversive vision which would later underpin the country's transition to freedom? Two basic elements may be stressed. First, a persistent identification with Western culture and customs, as made manifest by the experiences and memories of the in-



Lucas Kello

ter-war Republic, which provided a sharp relief against Soviet repressions. Second, the country's cultural and historical affinity with the Nordic countries. Linguistic and geographic proximity to Finland in particular furnished Estonians a unique bridge to the West during the period of Soviet occupation. For example, the penetration of Finnish television into northern Estonia represented an important cultural breach in the Iron Curtain. There was also the impact of Finland's success story as standard to be attained: In 1940, Estonia and Finland had achieved a comparable level of social and economic development; for this reason, the divergence in the two countries' trajectory after 1945 came to be regarded as a historical aberration in need of correction. So it was that in 1998 Estonia's foreign minister exclaimed: "Estonia should aim to become just another boring Nordic country."

The Nordic countries and the Estonian "economic miracle"

The transition to a market economy presented Estonian policy-makers with a formidable choice between graduated and radical reforms. According to Mart Laar, the first democratically elected leader after 1945, Finland's success "created a good basis for radical reforms." Three aspects of Estonia's radical reform strategy may be noted; in each, the Nordic countries played an instrumental role.

**A. Commercial openness.** One of the most striking developments occurred in the reorientation of trade. By 1992 the Laar government dismantled nearly all trade restrictions. That same year Finland became Estonia's main trading partner, and by 2000 Finland and Sweden accounted for 51 percent of the country's total trade. Trade with the advanced Nordic markets produced significant advantages in the form of increased industrial production and overall competitiveness, helping to fuel the economic boom of the late 1990s.

**B. FDI.** In the 1990s Estonia achieved formidable success in attracting foreign—particularly Nordic—capital. Four policy initiatives from 1992–94 drove this achievement: (i) introduction of the kroon and stabilization of the currency markets; (ii) swift legislation to bolster the rule of law; (iii) a head-on fight against corruption; (iv) a firm commitment to private property and removal of entry barriers to foreign investors. These swift and daring initiatives facilitated massive influxes of Nordic capital, so that by 2000 Finland and Sweden together accounted for 80 percent of capital inflows.

**C. ICT revolution.** The development of Estonia's information and communications technology sector is a defining feature of the country's economic transition. Today the internet permeates private and public life in Estonia, further bolstering the

country's economic competitiveness. Two factors were paramount in this development: Nordic capital and technology transfers, which enabled Estonia to become a player in the global ICT production network, coupled with Estonian policy-makers' consistent commitment to pioneering sophisticated ICT practices.

Nordic interventions in Estonia's quest for security after 1991

For a tiny nation such as Estonia long the victim of foreign occupation, no achievement in democratic governance or economic prosperity could be meaningful unless the country's physical integrity could also be safeguarded. In 1991 that seemed a distant prospect indeed. For Estonia had almost no defense infrastructure whatever—even as the former occupying power maintained thirty-thousand troops on national soil. The quest for security had therefore to be launched from scratch. The Nordic countries, especially Finland and Denmark, played a central but also partly contradictory role in this endeavor. Three themes must be considered here:

**A. Military hardware.** The Nordics were instrumental in building up Estonia's hard-power capabilities. In 1992 the Finns provided patrol vessels and much-needed financial assistance; in 1994 they began wholesale donation of retired but useable equipment; in 2002–03 they were centrally involved in the establishment of an air



surveillance system in Estonia. In later years, Denmark too assisted in the drafting of defense procurements in line with NATO requirements.

**B. Defense doctrine.** During the early post-Communist years Estonia lacked a coherent defense doctrine. This owes to a fundamental “battle of ideas” between two competing perspectives—one borrowed from Finland, the other impulsed by Denmark. The “Finnish Boys” (Soomepoisid) advocated adoption of a Finnish-style defense model based on “total defense” and conscription, derived from Finland’s experience in the Winter War (1939–40). Others sought a military force centered on professional deployable units, as required under NATO accession criteria.

By 1993 NATO accession became established as the country’s prime security objective. Yet it was the Finnish model that in practice gained ascendancy during the early years of transition—in 1996, for instance, the Riigikogu (legislature) approved a total defense structure. Ideological interventions from Finland played a major role in this development: “Total defense” was advanced most prominently by young Estonian officers who had trained in Finland and, later, by the General Staff, which in 1996 launched a formal working relationship with retired Finnish officers (Viroprojekt). Yet plans to create a professionalized mobile force advanced in parallel. In 1994 a Baltic Battalion was established to prepare for peacekeeping missions; in 1998 a Baltic Defense College was founded in Tartu, furthering the cause of a professional army. Both of these were Danish-led initiatives.

The doctrinal incongruities of the 1990s have since been largely resolved. Today the concept of “total defense” and professional units coexist as complementary pillars of Estonia’s national defense model. But the ideological contentions of earlier years have left a unique imprint, in that Estonia is one of the few former Communist members of NATO to have retained conscription.

**C. Cyber-defense leadership.** Estonia has recently been able to carve for itself a niche within NATO in the area of cyber-defense. Two factors were key here. First, is Estonia’s success in establishing a sophisticated critical information infrastructure largely, as was noted, through the assistance of Nordic capital and technology transfers. Second, is the country’s expertise in cyber-defense, acquired during the large-scale “denial-of-service” attacks of April 2007. This experience raised Estonia’s profile within NATO as a vanguard nation in the field of cyber-security, as evidenced by the alliance’s decision in 2008 to establish a Cyber-Defense Center of Excellence in Tallinn.

#### 4. Closing remarks

There is no doubt that Estonia's location along the fifty-ninth parallel at the periphery of the Nordic community has conferred it special advantages in its quest for prosperity and security after 1991. Today, Estonia ranks thirteenth in the world in economic freedom, third in press freedom, and second in "e-governance"—all firsts among the former Communist states. The factors which combined to produce these benefits were both ideological and material in character.

In the economic sphere, an ideological commitment to Western norms and, in particular, the use of Finland as an example for swift radical reform were instrumental in delivering Estonia's "economic miracle" of price stability, rapid growth, high FDI inflows, and technological development. In the area of security, the Nordics were key in developing Estonia's defense infrastructure and doctrine. Although conflicting doctrinal inputs from Finland and Denmark partly obstructed the path to NATO operability, Estonia has recently demonstrated its ability to participate successfully in NATO missions abroad (e.g., Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo) even as it retains a commitment to total defense at home. Further, the decision to host NATO's cyber-defense nucleus in Tallinn suggests that Estonia is well poised to assume a position of leadership within the alliance disproportionate to the country's small size.





## Authoritarianism versus Democracy in Belarus: Does National Identity Matter?

*Hanna Vasilevich*

18 years after the collapse of the USSR, Belarus, once one of the most prosperous and promising Soviet Republics, has chosen a radical and unexpected way of development instead of following its western neighbors Latvia and Lithuania, which, while sharing a similar background and history, are nowadays members of the EU.

In 1994, after three years of democratic and economic reforms similar to the ones in Latvia and Lithuania, Belarusians elected a president who has been concentrating all power in his hands and installed a soviet-style rule over the country. Some people call him “accidental president” (Paval Šaramiet and Šviatlana Kalinkina, *Niezvyčajny Prezydent*), suggesting he came into office by chance and abused the power associated with his position. However, neither the choice of the president nor the authoritarian regime established in Belarus today can be considered accidental. Instead, the lack of national identity in Belarus seems to be a plausible explanation for this situation.

Definitions of nation, authoritarianism and dictatorship

The explanation that the return of Belarus from the path of democratic reform to authoritarianism is based on the lack of national identity, requires some preliminary definitions.

According to Ernest Gellner “two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.”<sup>1</sup> Josef Stalin considered nation as “a historically formed stable community of language, territory, economics and of a psychical individuality resulting from cultural values”.<sup>2</sup> Since culture is one of the key elements to define a nation it is necessary to add another description of culture in the USSR by Stalin which he characterized as “national in form, socialist in content.” This perception merges the notions of socialist and national and makes people perceive socialism as a part of their own culture, which leads to the acceptance of the Soviet mentality meaning a strong adherence of a person to the past Soviet system at the expense of one’s own national consciousness.

1 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*. Ithaca, NY, 1983, p. 7.

2 Karl Josef Partsch, *Nations, Peoples*, in: *Encyclopedia of public international law* : Publ. under the auspices of the Max-Planck-Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law under the direction of Rudolf Bernhardt / Assistant General Editor: Peter Macalister-Smith., Amsterdam [etc.] 1997, vol. 3, pp. 511-515 (512).



Hanna Vasilevich

Furthermore, authoritarian regime and dictatorship, two different terms often used to describe Alexander Lukashenka's rule, have to be distinguished. An authoritarian regime, according to Andrew Heywood, is a practice to exercise government "from above;" the exercise of authority regardless of the consent of the governed. It differs from authority which rests in people's legitimation. While oppressing opposition and political liberties the regime may tolerate a significant range of economic, religious and other freedoms.<sup>3</sup> Dictatorship in Heywood's opinion is a rule by a single individual; in short, the arbitrary and unchecked exercise of power. Dictators are seen as being above the law and as acting beyond their constitutional constraints.<sup>4</sup> Lukashenka is acting within the scope of Belarusian laws which were legitimized by referenda. However, the consent of the governed is formal. Despite oppressing the opposition, Lukashenka's regime tolerates a significant range of economic, religious and other freedoms which classifies it as authoritarianism.

#### Short historical overview

Belarusian society saw itself as rather Soviet and therefore independence did not result in a clear vision for nation-building. Independence came indeed as a surprise for one of the most stable and prosperous republics of the USSR, and both the elites and the people were not prepared for it. There was no real alternative to the Communist Party, whose leadership lacked nationally-oriented charismatic figures (such as Algirdas Brazauskas in Lithuania).

The three years from 1991 to 1994, during which Belarus was run by the (post)-communist nomenclature, were mainly spent on the fight against the economic crisis, the creation of state institutions, and the introduction of a rewritten / revised history, different from the one offered by Soviet textbooks, which in a way forced a sort of Belaruthenization. However, the government neither had any clear program that was understandable for the population nor did it promote an ideology of the new state by actively embracing a new or a forgotten identity.

From the very beginning, the Belarusian opposition mainly consisted of a movement that concentrated on cultural and linguistic issues. At the same time this opposition, the Belarusian Popular Front, was the only nationally oriented group in Belarusian politics that had never gotten any support from Belarusians under Soviet rule. It was also inconsistent in explaining its program and political goals to the population, with the incapability to properly explain the Chernobyl tragedy and Stalinist repressions to the society to name but the most prominent examples.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Heywood, *Key concepts in politics*, Basingstoke, 2000, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> Heywood, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

Instead, the opposition repeatedly denied a “brotherhood” between Belarusians and Russians, a concept intensively and rather successfully promoted in the USSR. Some of the former Soviet republics established their identity based on “otherness” and the contrast to being Russian. In Belarus where people mainly perceived themselves as Soviets rather than Belarusians this was not the case.

The development of Belarus after the collapse of the USSR

Lukashenka, after assuming power, reintroduced Russian as the official language next to Belarusian on an equal legal basis. He also promised and actively promoted the restoration of the Belarusian-Russian “brotherhood.” It was president Lukashenka who also eliminated national symbols—the white-red-white flag and the Chase (which was the coat of arms of the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania)—and replaced them with a flag and coat of arms almost identical with those of the Soviet Belarusian Republic. This “secured” the continuation of Soviet traditions in Belarus which were different and incompatible with the traditions presented by the Belarusian national movement. In 1996, Lukashenka succeeded to convince the people of the necessity to concentrate all power in his hands. This was the beginning of the authoritarian regime and proof that people had not adopted a new identity but instead still followed the traditions established in the Soviet Union.



The opening panel with Lucas Kello from Estonia, Nik Hynek from IIR, Hanna Vasilevich from Belarus, and Tomáš Weiss from the Czech Republic

Both President and opposition tried to “introduce” their often contradictory visions of Belarus. On March 25, 1918, the Belarusian People’s Republic had been created—a key date for the opposition. However, the President did (and does) not include this date into the official canon of Belarusian history. In his view, Belarusian independence is directly linked to the victory in World War II. The war took the life of every fourth, and according to some new researches even of every third person living in Belarus before 1939. This war is hence still deeply rooted in people’s minds, especially in the memories of those people who survived the war or were actively fighting it.

Against this background, Lukashenka promoted his vision of Belarus in his 2001 election campaign, using the slogan “for a strong and flourishing Belarus.” His promises included the combat against corruption, the increased role of the government, economic liberalization with a guaranteed level of social security and further integration with Russia.

On its turn, the opposition during this election campaign focused on a negative campaign against Lukashenka. This approach brought some advantages; a large part of the society was unaware of the situation of the disappearances of some prominent politicians (former Minister and MPs), businessmen, and journalists, who to a varying degree had criticized the regime. But the president’s team found an effective solution to this problem: they reminded the population of Uladzimir Hancharyk’s (who was the candidate of the united opposition during the 2001 elections and the head of the official Trade Union FTB) communist nomenclature past and high-lighted the early years of independence, characterized by inflation, corruption, social insecurity and instability.

Moreover, Lukashenka did not just want to win the election, he aspired to become a “nation-wide elected” president (called Baćka, in Belarusian: Father), considered the master of the house (in our case—of the state). He started embracing the formula “people are me” and attempted to attract those for whom Belarusian independence and patriotism were more than just words. He referred to traditional values largely using slogans: “for Belarus,” or “for stability.” After the elections of 2001, Lukashenka also initiated the creation of the Belarusian Patriotic (currently Republican) Union of Youth, aimed at the creation of a politically loyal youth and future elites. This was combined with the introduction of a state ideology in educational establishments. The latter represents rather subjective political think-

ing, but includes many attributes of soviet nationalism and has been referred to by some authors as “egalitarian nationalism” (Natalia Leshchenko).<sup>5</sup>

#### The security dimension of Belarusian authoritarianism

Belarus is usually portrayed as an authoritarian country or even as a dictatorship and thus differs from all the countries of the region which are seen as established or even consolidated democracies. The divergence of political regimes from the Belarusian one is a priori seen as a factor which threatens the country’s security especially taking into account the location of Belarus, which borders the EU (neighboring Latvia, Lithuania and Poland). Another security issue is seen in Belarusian foreign policy’s orientation towards a closer union with Russia, which was implemented in a so-called “union state of Belarus and Russia.”<sup>6</sup> Given the tensions between the European Union and Russia (exemplified by the gas conflict with Ukraine, the war in Georgia, different approaches towards the independence of Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia), this “union state” is seen as a potential source of instability in the region by some of its neighbors. At the same time, there is a certain lack of information about the real situation that exists in Belarus today. Therefore, the country is seen as a black box which has not been understood yet and, in turn, this lack of understanding and knowledge creates a feeling of insecurity and threat in many European countries.

Nevertheless, it is also important to analyze the existing and available information that might help to create a framework for the events and trends in Belarus which might have security-related implications.

Firstly, it is important to understand the implications of the “union state,” which might be seen as one of the major threats. Established in the end of the 1990s, when Boris Yeltsin was Russian president, the union had been developing quite quickly at the beginning (elimination of the border control between Russian and Belarus, equal rights of the citizens of both countries, free movement of goods and services). With Vladimir Putin entering into office and becoming the second Russian president, the process did, however, slow down significantly. The core problem of the “union” became the introduction of the Russian ruble as a common currency which was rejected by Belarusian authorities. Several attempts at blackmailing from the Russian side (increasing gas prices and cutting off gas supply) failed to coerce Belarusian authorities and brought the “union” to stagnation.

5 Cf. Natalia Leshchenko, The national ideology and the basis of the Lukashenka regime in Belarus, in: *Europe-Asia Studies*, October 2008, pp. 1419–1433.

6 For further explanation see <[http://www.mfa.gov.by/en/multilateral/int\\_org/ref/c06dda3682ded84c.html](http://www.mfa.gov.by/en/multilateral/int_org/ref/c06dda3682ded84c.html)> and <<http://soyuz.by/en/>>.

For Belarus, the “union state” can be understood as an economic tool to receive cheap natural resources and obtain easier access to the Russian market, whereas the political dimension of this integration remains blocked by Belarusian authorities. Therefore the “union” creates no threat to the EU or international community in this respect. A good example in support of this argument is the neutrality and unwillingness of Belarusian authorities to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia despite strong Russian pressure.

#### Conclusion

Authoritarianism in Belarus should not be seen as an absolute threat or source of possible instability, since the regime itself is stable enough to prevent the emergence of a regional “black hole.” Neither authorities’ election frauds, nor students’ and entrepreneurs’ protests, or even the economic sanctions were able to destabilize the situation in the country. Surprisingly or not, over 50 per cent of the population still support the regime, and so far the regime functions well to uphold stability within the country, with external events having little effect on the regime. In contrast, democratic Georgia and Ukraine, with all their turbulences and constant changes are much less stable. The instability in other regions, however, does not affect stability in Belarus.

In that respect, even an undemocratic Belarus does not pose a security threat to the region. The understanding of this fact and the role of national identity for the regime’s popularity is crucial for the EU to make its negotiation efforts and policy towards Belarus more effective.



## Driving Forces of Change and Reform: Conditionality and its Inherent Limits

*Tomáš Weiss*

The European Union has a successful record in persuasion rather than coercion when it comes to supporting third countries to undergo thorough change and initiate reforms in line with the EU's norms and values. The enlargement of the EU has been the most effective tool in this respect, because it provided the EU with the largest and juiciest "carrot" in town. Enlargement has been called the EU's most successful foreign policy tool. The lessons learned have been transferred into other policy areas, such as the European Neighborhood Policy or relations with ACP countries, with the principle of conditionality.

All contributions presented in the panel "Democracy and Security: Perspectives from Central and Eastern Europe" address the influence of the EU and its member states on their neighborhood, their role in the transformation processes, as well as the limits of such influence. Whereas the Estonian case can be regarded as a success, Belarus, called by some the black hole in Europe, has resisted any European pressure for change so far. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe have made their way into the EU, but their transformation is still very much in progress as can be witnessed on an everyday basis, especially in more turbulent times, such as during the current financial and economic crisis. Several key lessons for the EU's conditionality and its limits can be formulated.

Firstly, the basic decisions on the nature of the system, the concrete institutional settings, and the identity of the people have to be taken into account within a country. The EU cannot and mostly even does not want to take responsibility for these basic decisions, not least because there is neither a single institutional set-up nor identity within the EU and its member states and the EU would not be able to agree on and formulate a coherent recommendation. The examples of Estonia and Belarus are compelling in this respect. The Estonian political elite as well as the population have deliberately decided to regard themselves as "Nordic," which has not only guided them in their transformation and resulted in their EU and NATO membership, but also enabled close political and economic ties to the Scandinavians and Finland. Belarus, on the other hand, has so far remained willingly oriented to its East due to the population's (post-)Soviet sentiments. Similarly, the authoritarian regime has remained in power largely because the population has so far preferred stability over democracy and human rights.



Tomáš Weiss



Secondly, however, the European Union can provide an impetus for bigger and more thorough change as soon as the demand is present within the countries. This is the very moment where conditionality can affect the behavior of states, their politicians, and their people. The EU's influence is twofold: It offers ready-made solutions based on the practice and experience in single member states, along with experts that may assist the country in transition. The role of Italian experts helping to set up the Czech ministry for regional development in the 1990s may serve as an illustration of this point. At the same time, the EU and its requirements provide backing for the politicians within the country, and serve as an excuse and cover for painful reforms that accompany every transition (a practice well known not only in countries in transition, but also EU member states).

Thirdly, not everything that the EU requires from partners is clearly defined. Moreover, the EU's demands hardly ever cover the whole spectrum of measures that the country in transition must adopt. The EU is very detailed on technical issues, standardization, or economic and environmental topics, but very vague on issues of good governance, the rule of law, or in any other similar area. The country in transition might be required to provide for division of power, but it will not be offered a single possible way of how to achieve this. This limitation of the EU's influence reflects the way the EU works internally, summarized in the EU's official motto "United in Diversity." The EU is uniting on technicalities, but allows diversity on issues that do not require standardization in order to work properly within the integration context. While transitioning countries are not officially bound by the EU's legal acts, first steps and reforms are usually taken to converge to the Union's legal system. In this respect, the distinction between regulations and directives / framework decisions in European law is a useful tool and indicator for these countries to assess in which areas they may expect the EU to be very explicit or to give only broad guidelines.

Lastly, although financial assistance has also been a very useful carrot in the EU's conditionality mechanism, there are certain limits to it as well. The transformation is very costly and the EU's financial assistance cannot be more than what the name suggests. The bulk of the costs have to be covered by the transitioning countries themselves.

To conclude, there are inherent limits to the European Union's concept of conditionality. Change has to be initiated and largely also paid for from within the country. Only then the EU as a model and what it offers starts influencing the decisions more significantly. The conditionality helps the countries in transition change

more smoothly and swiftly, but the EU needs more tools to promote democracy and good governance, especially where the domestic pressures are not sufficient.



## The European Union's Three-Level Impact on Democratization of Ukraine: the Diplomatic Level, the Indirect Leverage, and the Bottom-Up Approach

*Svitlana A. Kobzar*



Svitlana A. Kobzar

Serious irregularities during the 2004 presidential elections created a crisis in Ukraine and sparked a debate concerning the effectiveness of the EU in supporting democratization<sup>1</sup> in non-candidate states. There is little consensus either in EU institutions or in the Ukrainian government on the EU's role during the election crisis but also, more importantly, the decade preceding it. In order to analyze the EU's effectiveness in contributing to the movement of Ukraine toward substantive democracy, it is essential to provide a comprehensive analysis of domestic and international elements prior to the 2004 elections. International factors made a significant contribution towards Ukraine's democratization, but should not be considered the sole explanation of the process. However, the aim of this study is not to explain democratization in Ukraine, but rather to focus on the "EU factor" and the different levels of influence that it exerts.<sup>2</sup>

### Conceptualizing the "European Union Factor" in Democratization

To analyze the "EU factor" in the democratic transition of Ukraine, it is useful to adopt some of the elements from the literature that evaluates the impact of international organizations on the domestic reforms of post-Soviet states.<sup>3</sup> It is important to distinguish between the various types of influence that the EU can exert. This paper examines the direct and indirect influences of the EU, including the formal (the diplomatic / government) level of regime change, the role of the political elite and policy orientation.

On the formal level, the EU promotes democratization through political dialogue. The EU seeks to support institutional change in partner countries by such means

- 1 Democratization is generally defined as "a process of regime change that is directed towards a specific aim: the establishment and stabilization of substantive democracy" (see H. Schmitz and K. Sell, *International Factors in Processes of Political Democratization: Towards a Theoretical Integration*, in: Jean Grugel (ed.), *Democracy Without Borders: Transnationalization and Conditionality in New Democracies*, London and New York 1999, p. 25).
- 2 This paper is a part of the work-in-progress chapter from my doctoral dissertation. The research focuses on the period from 1994 to 2004. The chapter that this paper draws on encompasses the "external" factor in Ukraine's discourse on Europe.
- 3 Much of the increased volume of literature in the past decade began to integrate international factors into their analysis of democratization (See, for instance, Geoffrey Pridham, *The International Dimension of Democratisation: Theory, Practice and Inter-Regional Comparisons*, in: Geoffrey Pridham [et al.] (ed.), *Building Democracy? The International Dimension of Democratisation in Eastern Europe*, London and Washington, DC, 1994; H. Schmitz and K. Sell, *International Factors in Processes of Political Democratization: Towards a Theoretical Integration*, in: Jean Grugel (ed.), *op.cit.* (note 1).

as regular summits, committee meetings and negotiations within the framework of the association or partnership agreements. Such institutionalization of the political dialogue may, in turn, contribute to the furthering of democratic reforms by maintaining communication links with different members of society.<sup>4</sup> Influence through the formal level also includes the incorporation of European institutional models, such as constitution making and judicial reform, which can be supported and / or directly influenced by the EU.

There is also an indirect influence on elite mentalities and external policy orientation. The “passive leverage” exercised by the EU may be the mere idea of potential, yet unrecognized, membership.<sup>5</sup> Even if the idea of a “return to Europe” may initially be pronounced as a declarative and historically symbolic statement, it can have a deeper effect on policy formulation and the mentality of political elites; as Kubicek maintains: “The invocation initially may be cynical ... but the very fact that the norms are given voice will affect their resonance.”<sup>6</sup>

Another important level that has been examined within the same conceptual framework is the influence of the EU on civil society. The concept of “civil society” itself is ambiguous. Generally, organizations with functions in the areas “between the state and the individual” are referred to as civil society.<sup>7</sup> While recognizing that civil society includes a variety of organizations and social movements, this paper will focus especially on the role of the EU in supporting the NGO sector in Ukraine.

#### The Diplomatic Level: EU-Ukraine Political Dialogue and Democratization

Several factors contribute to a highly complex EU-Ukraine relationship which have impeded the EU’s ability to use all of its resources to promote substantive democracy. The continual declarations by the Ukrainian government proclaiming its desire to pursue EU membership made it difficult for EU leaders to respond. As a large country with substantial agricultural and industrial sectors, Ukraine would not be an easy country for the EU’s stomach to “digest.” The weak political and economic situation in Ukraine has made it easier for the EU to maintain a formal partnership and to retain the ability to postpone candidacy discussions.

4 Geoffrey Pridham, Rethinking regime-change theory and the international dimension of democratisation: ten years after in East-Central Europe, in: Geoffrey Pridham and A. Agh (ed.), *Prospects for democratic consolidation in East-Central Europe*, New York and Manchester, 2001, pp. 75–76.

5 Milada Vachudova, *The leverage of International Institutions on Democratizing States: Eastern Europe and the European Union* (Working Paper for the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, RSCAS No. 33), San Domenico di Fiesole 2001, p. 7.

6 Paul Kubicek, *International norms, the European Union, and democratization: tentative theory and evidence*, in: Paul Kubicek (ed.), *The European Union and Democratization*, London and New York, NY, 2003, p. 15.

7 Jean Grugel, *Democratization A Critical Introduction*, New York, NY, 2002, p. 93.

It is important to note, nevertheless, that despite Leonid Kuchma's abuse of power and the major hurdles that Ukraine encountered along the path toward democratic consolidation, the EU maintained a formal dialogue with the regime in power. Relations were maintained despite the apparent tensions on both sides over the implementation of the PCA (Partnership and Co-operation Agreement), the membership issue and reports regarding instances of human rights abuses. During interviews several officials reiterated that amid negotiations, EU leaders were careful not to alienate officials from the Kuchma Administration and thus push the country further towards the brink of "Belarusification." Ukraine's size and its potential for instability could result in serious consequences for the EU if that was to happen. Some EU officials shared the opinion that it was possible to recognize that the Ukrainian elite were not unanimous in their backing of President Kuchma. Moreover, despite the frequent parallels drawn with Belarus, Ukrainian society has been more open than that of Belarus. These caveats allowed the formal dialogue with the government to be used to continue disseminating ideas of the importance of democratization.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Commission Official B., European Union Delegation of the European Commission to Ukraine, Personal interview, Kyiv, May 5, 2005.



Discussing the role of the EU, NATO and Russia for democratization in Central and Eastern Europe

“Return to Europe” and Democratization: the Indirect Effect

By 1996 the European “vector” was declared as being among the primary foreign policy goals by the Ukrainian government.<sup>9</sup> The Presidential Administration of Ukraine proclaimed its “European choice” by arguing that the concept was inseparable from Ukrainian identity. In February 1996, Kuchma highlighted this point, stating, “the cradle of Ukrainian culture is European Christian civilization. That is where our home is, above all, Europe.”<sup>10</sup>

Although the Kuchma Government did not necessarily follow its declarations with adequate policy implementation, the fact that the majority of the elite and the general public supported such a foreign policy, legitimized the president’s efforts to consolidate power. The policy of pursuing EU integration was presented as a way to provide security and economic prosperity, “membership in this exclusive ‘club’ would be proof of Ukrainian success in the post-Soviet period.”<sup>11</sup> The short history of Ukraine’s foreign policy and the difficult transition path created a situation of uncertainty among both members of the elite and the general public. The conviction that the EU would enhance Ukraine’s security and economic development was held not only by the pro-Western elite, but also by business and government officials who believed in a “strategic partnership” with Russia.<sup>12</sup>

Several factors contributed to the internalization of the idea of a “return to Europe” whilst affecting indirectly the process of democratization. By declaring European integration as one of its primary foreign policy goals, the Kuchma Administration took some steps towards institutionalizing this choice. By the early 2000s, however, there was a growing awareness among the Ukrainian elite of the need for Ukraine to become a “European nation” with adequate democratic and economic standards. This awareness was evident in newspaper reports and speeches by public officials who began to mention the need for Ukraine to prepare effectively to meet European standards.

9 Paul Kubicek, *The European Union and Ukraine: real partners or relationship of convenience?*, in: Kubicek (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 6), p. 156.

10 Quoted in *ibid.*

11 Kubicek, *op. cit.* (note 9), p. 157.

12 Kataryna Wolczuk, *Integration without Europeanisation: Ukraine and its Policy towards the European Union* (Working Paper for the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, RSCAS No. 15), San Domenico di Fiesole 2004, p. 13.



## The European Union and Democratization in Ukraine: the Bottom-Up Approach

After the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election several commentators noted the importance of the role of civil society.<sup>13</sup> The sharp increase in the numbers of NGOs, from influential think tanks to small non-profit organizations, poses questions about their role in the democratic transition in Ukraine and the extent to which international support, that of the EU in particular, helped to establish the “third sector.”

When evaluating EU influence on civil society in Ukraine, it is important to consider both indirect and direct types of influences on democratization, including a model that the EU provides to NGOs as well as financial assistance, which is crucial for young organizations. Societal links between Ukraine and Central Eastern European countries enhanced the EU's ability to influence Ukraine's NGO sector indirectly. Ties with new EU members, Poland and Slovakia in particular, contributed to the development of the “third sector” in Ukraine.

In 1992, with the European Parliament initiative, the Democracy Programme within the PHARE (originally: Poland and Hungary: Aid for Restructuring of the Economies) and TACIS (technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States) framework was established. Both, PHARE and TACIS, aimed at “contributing to the development of pluralist democratic procedures and practices” by fostering a network of NGOs and “educating” the citizens of recipient countries concerning their role in a democratic society.<sup>14</sup> Compared to PHARE Programme, the TACIS approach achieved different results which became evident during the slow political and economic transformations of the recipient countries.<sup>15</sup> Research conducted by the International Centre for Policy Studies, an analytical center based in Kyiv, has shown that “the ad hoc, non-systematic assistance in Ukraine has resulted in considerably slower transformation in every way” if compared to the impact that the aid to Poland had after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup>

13 See Olaf Hillenbrand, Good Governance and the Need for Consensus-Building—A Framework for Democratic Transition, in: Helmut Kurth and Iris Kempe (ed.), Presidential Election and Orange Revolution Implications for Ukraine's Transition, Kyiv 2005, <[http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2005/2005\\_ukraine.pdf](http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2005/2005_ukraine.pdf)>, p. 27; Oleksandr Sushko and Oles Lisnychuk, The Election Campaign and Ukraine's Political Evolution, in: *ibid.*, p. 105; Iris Kempe and Iryna Solonenko, International Orientation and Foreign Support, in: *ibid.*, p. 109.

14 See European Commission, Evaluation of the PHARE and TACIS Democracy Programme 1992–1997, Brussels 1997.

15 The list of TACIS recipients includes Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Mongolia (<<http://europa.eu.int>>).

16 Policy Studies Technical Assistance: Two Views (International Centre for Policy Studies, Policy Studies No. 18), Kyiv, November 2002, p. 3.

Some authors argue that the contribution that TACIS has made to Ukraine's civil society is "mixed" since funds are "spread too thin,"<sup>17</sup> supporting NGOs located mainly in the capital.<sup>18</sup> Small NGOs, particularly those dealing with social transition, have difficulties in competing for international funding. Their ability to exist and function effectively is exacerbated by the excessive red-tape intrinsic in Ukraine.

### Conclusions

Different conclusions may be reached if only one type of EU influence is examined. The "EU factor" interacted with several domestic elements inherent in the democratization of Ukraine, including government efforts to implement reforms, the elite's desire to "return to Europe," and the development of civil society. The "Return to Europe" was among the most influential factors that became gradually internalized in the domestic agenda for reform in Ukraine (even though there are still members of the ruling elite who often doubt Ukraine's European vocation). The EU's power of attraction has proved to be one of the most powerful tools through which the EU was able to indirectly influence democratization in Ukraine. By institutionalizing the "European choice," the Kuchma Administration, in turn, contributed to a gradual change in the perception of Ukraine's elite of the requirements for EU membership. While initially, there was a belief that Ukraine's size and geographic location would guarantee the EU's unconditional support, in the early 2000s, there was a shift in the elite's perception which began to consider domestic factors as impediments to Ukraine's successful integration with Europe. Kuchma's failure to implement his declared policy contributed to the negative image among the Ukrainian elite and helped to discredit his government. It is important to note that there were numerous other factors, which contributed to Kuchma's downfall, which, however, are beyond the scope of this analysis.

17 Kybicek, *The European Union and Ukraine: real partners or relationship of convenience?*, in: Kubicek (ed.), op.cit (note 9), p. 160.

18 In 2002, 15 percent of all registered NGOs were located in Kyiv. See Liudmyla Kozak, *Neuriadovi orhanizatsii Ievropeis'koho Soiuzu: Porivnial'nyi analiz z hromads'kymy orhanizatsiiamy Ukraïny*, (Dzvony myru, Kyiv University), Kyiv 2002, p. 30.

## Assessing NATO's Potential Role for Democratization in Ukraine and Georgia

*Heidi Hermisson*

At this year's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit, jointly held by France and Germany, one major issue which dominated the previous year's summit was conspicuously downplayed—the future of Ukraine and Georgia within the Alliance.

At the Bucharest summit in April 2008, the United States pushed hard for both Ukraine and Georgia to receive invitations for a Membership Action Plan (MAP), a program outlining the applicant country's required reforms and its plan for accession. In the face of intense Russian opposition, NATO members Germany and France refused to extend them a MAP invitation. As a compromise, NATO issued a statement that Ukraine and Georgia “will become members of NATO,” and supported their future entry, although the time line was unspecified.

The 2009 summit marked NATO's sixtieth anniversary, and this historic milestone was an opportunity for a broad debate on the Alliance's future in terms of scope, mission, geography, and its role in the post-Cold War world. NATO's possible enlargement into the former territory of the Soviet Union itself is part of this debate, and it is against this backdrop that this paper addresses NATO's potential impact on Ukraine and Georgia. Specifically, it assesses whether opening NATO's doors to the two countries will help promote democracy in Ukraine and Georgia.

In order to do so, the paper is divided into two parts: First, there is a review of the key aspects of NATO's democracy promotion capability. This is presented along with an accompanying assessment of how much these capabilities could impact democracy in the cases of Ukraine and Georgia. The conclusion of this part is that NATO membership could make a positive, albeit severely limited, impact on Ukrainian and Georgian democratic progress.

NATO is only one external actor who may influence democratization in Ukraine and Georgia, however, and in the second part of the paper, two other major external actors are discussed. The European Union (EU) and the Russian Federation both play an influential role in Ukraine and Georgia, with varying consequences for democratization. The EU is attempting to support democratization in Ukraine and Georgia by recreating some of the instruments used in previous enlargements, which led to successful democracies in new members. Meanwhile, Russia has been wielding its influence as a detriment not just to Ukraine and Georgia's NATO bid



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but also to their democratic development. The final conclusion of the paper, then, is that in light of NATO's general weak track record in promoting democracy and its particularly weak capabilities with regard to Ukraine and Georgia, NATO membership would not significantly aid democratization in these countries. Membership in NATO should not currently be the priority for either NATO or these countries. Both countries need to focus on internal reforms and governance separately from the issue of NATO membership, and as much as possible take advantage of prospects offered by the EU through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the new Eastern Partnership.

How could NATO help promote democracy in Ukraine and Georgia?

There are three ways in which NATO can help applicant countries in their democratization efforts. First of all, through its procedures, joint missions and requirements it helps to bring military power securely under the wing of the civilian government. This has played a major role in the progress of democracy in countries such as Poland and Hungary. In the cases of Ukraine and Georgia, civilian control over the military has never been a major issue, and is generally not considered one of the most critical hurdles for democracy. However, there was an attempted military coup in the run up to recent NATO military exercises scheduled in Georgia. This took place despite Georgia's membership within the Partnership for Peace (PfP), a program which both countries have concluded with NATO and under which each country has a number of individual agreements and joint trainings and missions with NATO forces. Therefore any progress in this aspect should already be taking place within the NATO framework, and despite apparent setbacks in Georgia, it is not clear that offering full NATO membership would make a significant difference for the democratization of either country.

The second way in which NATO can help promote democracy in an applicant country is through the transfer of norms and values. Many of the Central and Eastern European countries which applied for NATO membership after the fall of Communism considered NATO (along with the European Union) as one of the pillars of western-style democracy, and were eager to adopt its principles in order to pursue their own democratic path. In order for these democratization incentives to materialize, however, the country's population and elites must not only be in favor of joining NATO, but should also be convinced of the need for democracy, and not just the benefit of a security guarantee which NATO has to offer. In Ukraine and Georgia, it is unclear whether these conditions are met, and therefore the extent to which NATO can play a role in transferring and supporting the adaptation of norms is questionable.

The final way in which NATO membership requires democratic development is that applicants must settle their territorial disputes with neighbors before joining. Georgia has two hostile separatist regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, over which it was provoked to armed conflict with Russia in August 2008. As a result of this conflict, Ukraine has experienced some renewed ethnic and territorial tensions. Obviously, NATO's membership requirement that a country establish regional stability with its neighbors should support democracy and stability in Ukraine and Georgia, but there is no real progress being made towards that goal. Georgia has not made serious diplomatic efforts to resolve its territorial issues, and its separatist regions have turned to Russia, an antagonist of NATO, for support. While Georgia should pursue a resolution with its separatist regions and thus comply with NATO's requirement, there can be no serious discussion of Georgia's entry into the Alliance while the requirement remains unfulfilled. To do so would not only destabilize Georgia, but allowing a member who has a dispute with Russia to join NATO poses an enormous risk to the Alliance as a whole.

Other actors influencing democratization in Ukraine and Georgia

The path of democracy in Ukraine and Georgia is also affected by the external actors, the EU and Russia. The EU has had great success influencing democracy in post-Communist neighbors through its enlargement process, known as the best democracy promotion tool ever. In an effort to replicate enlargement's success, the EU has created the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) for its new neighbors. The ENP is a bilateral program which offers some of the benefits of integration with the EU, such as participation in the internal market, in return for reforms undertaken by the countries. Both Ukraine and Georgia are currently participating in ENP agreements with the EU. In order to emphasize its interest in shaping democracy in former Communist countries to its east, the EU recently launched an "Eastern Partnership" initiative, which includes both Ukraine and Georgia and which represents an additional multilateral tool of the EU in its relations with its Eastern neighbors.

However, NATO membership offers two key characteristics that EU membership does not: an American presence and military power in defense. These issues are both extremely important for Ukraine and Georgia, and in these aspects EU membership can not substitute for NATO membership. The United States has supported democratic progress in both countries both financially and politically, and democratic governments in both countries seek the security and military protection of NATO's Article 5 which provides assurance that allies will defend other members in case of an attack. It is possible that Ukraine and Georgia felt more

secure if they had an assurance that the military power of the US and European allies were behind them, and this might allow them to focus less on territorial integrity (i.e., conflict with Russia) and more on democratic reforms. These two potential benefits do play a significant role in the bid for NATO membership and are especially compelling to Ukraine and Georgia.

Russia figures largely into the politics and democratic processes in both Ukraine and Georgia. Due to their historical past, linguistic and ethnic ties, as well as energy dependence, relations with Russia remain extremely sensitive and important to both countries. Russia seems willing to intervene in its former territory when its interests are impinged, burdening democratic leaders through its military and energy power. In August 2008, Russia backed Georgia's separatist regions against Georgian military incursion, and since the Orange Revolution in 2004 in Ukraine, it has sharply raised gas prices and even shut off supplies on an annual basis. This year's gas row has tested an already-fractious government coalition, which has led to paralysis in the reform process.

In light of the fact that NATO membership cannot significantly promote democracy in neither Ukraine nor Georgia, even less so given the geo-political challenges presented by Russia's continued influence, currently pursuing NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia under the argument of promoting and supporting democracy in these countries does not stand.

## “Colored Revolutions” in the Wider Black Sea Region and the “Geopoliticization” of Democracy

*Vsevolod Samokhvalov*

In analyzing the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region, and their effects for the regional security system, two questions are particularly interesting. First, why have relations between these states and Russia, despite the initial enthusiasm about the colored revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, gradually deteriorated posing a serious threat to security in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region? Second, what is the role of Russian foreign policy in these developments and what are its driving forces and guiding principles with regard to the phenomenon of democratization in its former sphere of influence?

Contrary to the widely accepted opinion, the Russian Federation under Vladimir Putin has not pursued an overtly negative attitude towards democratization in the Balkans and the Black Sea Region, namely Serbia, Georgia, Abkhazia and Ukraine. More than that, Moscow demonstrated a certain understanding of the democratic revolutions in Serbia and Georgia given the fact that the local leaders were highly unpopular. When the political crises in these countries reached their peak, the Russian Federation exerted pressure on the intransigent authoritarian leaders Slobodan Milošević and Eduard Shevarnadze to resolve the political standoff and to prevent further destabilization of the situation. Russia also provided assistance to the new democratic leadership of Georgia to restore its control over the semi-autonomous province of Adjara.

It was, however, noticeable that in all these cases the Russian side emphasized two points. First, Russia declared its expectations that the new democratic leadership of Serbia and Georgia would do its best to restore good relations with Moscow. Second, Moscow voiced its concerns that democratic revolutions tended to undermine political stability and legal culture in these countries and in the region. Hence, in the two cases, Moscow tried to do its best in order to ensure its strong international standing regarding relations with these countries and in the European system of international affairs. It had constantly positioned itself as a reliable mediator and security producer in the Wider Black Sea Area.

The divergent patterns of Russia-Serbia and Russia-Georgia relations show that the key factor, which defined Russia’s position in relations to the new democracies, was their allegiance with either the Euro-Atlantic or the Russia-led security system. Once Georgia demonstrated its intentions to join NATO and revise



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the existing international arrangements concerning the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Moscow adopted a more aggressive foreign policy towards Tbilisi.

The fact that “the West” had refused to admit Russia’s grievances about Georgia’s position regarding the breakaway republics was seen in Moscow as the indication that “the West” preferred the promotion of its own interest over the preservation of the status quo and fair-play rules in international politics. As a result, Moscow radicalized its rhetoric about Western democratization projects, which were considered to be instruments of “the West’s” geopolitical expansion and were to be treated accordingly.

With the geopoliticization of democracy, Russia played an active role in the presidential elections in Abkhazia and Ukraine in 2004 by supporting pro-Russian candidates. Particularly in the case of Abkhazia in 2004, Putin supported Abkhaz Prime-Minister and former KGB officer Raul Khadjimba, a protégé of Abkhaz President in office Vladislav Ardzinba. In Ukraine, President Putin supported Prime-Minister Viktor Yanukovich, the Chairman of the Party of Regions, who mobilized support from the Russian-speaking population of the East and South of Ukraine.

In both cases, Russian policies failed. The democratic leaders in Abkhazia and Ukraine mobilized their supporters for public protests. Although Moscow did not succeed in bringing its own candidates into office, it still tried to ensure that its interests be secured in these countries. In Abkhazia, Moscow accepted the victory of the democratic candidate on the condition that Kremlin’s protégé Khadjimba would be assigned vice-president. Once Russia secured that Abkhazia remained anchored to Russia under the new leadership, it did not attach great significance to the internal political developments in Abkhazia. In Ukraine, meanwhile, the Euro-Atlanticist President Viktor Yushchenko came to office with curtailed powers. The authorities of the parliament were extended and Moscow secured its access to Ukrainian politics through the pro-Russian party of Yanukovich. Kremlin had repeatedly stressed that it expected efforts from the Ukrainian leadership to restore Russian-Ukrainian relations. In particular, Moscow wanted Ukraine to support the integration processes in the Post-Soviet Space and reconsider its NATO-accession plans. However, Ukraine as well as Georgia seemed to have firmly opted for the Euro-Atlanticist course.

It was obvious that the Russian Federation would hardly be able to win the soft-power competition with the EU, NATO and the US. Georgian and Ukrainian

political elites preferred European norms and standards over Russian patterns of social organization and its political system. Russia could not only balance such a situation by making Kiev and Tbilisi feel the negative outcomes of the Euro-Atlantic trajectory as tangible as possible. As the new democratic elites of Ukraine and Georgia pursued their intention to join NATO and the EU, a number of crises erupted in their bilateral relations with Russia. The crises became manifest in sudden interruptions of gas supply for Georgia, bans for import of Georgian wines and mineral waters and Ukrainian dairy products and strong alcoholic drinks, as well as an increase of gas prices for both countries.

Creating insecurities (energy leverage, trade wars, etc.) has been a frequently used instrument of Russian foreign policy in relations with Black Sea democracies. The ultimate goal of this policy was to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from turning to the Euro-Atlantic security system and demonstrate to other Post-Soviet states that explosive democratization might not lead to the proclaimed goals of stability, prosperity and security. This point became a central theme in the Russian strategic narrative about democracy in international affairs, with former President Putin voicing this view in every press conference and interview. In this respect, the destabilizing situation in Georgia and Ukraine and the simultaneous deterioration of their relations with Russia served as convincing evidence that Western democratization and reconstruction projects in the post-Soviet space inevitably



Licinia Simão, Alexander Wolters, Vsevolod Samokhvalov, Lucas Kello, Piotr Janusz Wysiński

contributed to the destabilization of the entire region. Put bluntly, the narrative postulated that what was done without Russia or its consent was doomed to fail.

Such policies had two consequences for the democratic development in Georgia and Ukraine. First, Russia's shock-therapies against democracy in these countries resulted in a strengthened "Otherisation" discourse in these countries. Public debates in Ukraine and Georgia referred to Russia as the hegemon, which had suppressed their genuine and natural development for years, and stressed the chance to finally escape from Russian hegemony, to become independent and democratic. The debates further claimed that Moscow, as an autocratic and imperial power, was again trying to suppress Georgian and Ukrainian attempts to acquire genuine democracy and independence.

The Otherization seems to serve as an internal nation-building program in Ukraine and Georgia. After a series of crises in bilateral relations with Russia, however, the political debate in these states has shifted to more moderate terms, which has become a second remarkable consequence of these developments. Once referred to as the "Finlandization" of these countries, even some ardent supporters of Euro-Atlantic integration have now revised their rhetoric in favor of a more pragmatic cooperation with Russia and, in the case of Ukraine, even advocating the departure from NATO-accession ambitions. Many of them openly advocate the Finnish *de jure* neutral foreign policy that has allowed Helsinki to develop pragmatic relations with Moscow as an example for their countries to follow.

General premises of the democratic peace theory have mostly pointed to the fact that democratic countries do not go to war with each other. However, for further research of the democratic peace theory the following factors should be taken into account. First, the international configuration of the region: the presence of former empires, contested regions and / or national minorities who consider the neighboring regions their motherland. It should be noted though that probably the size, shared history and ethnic similarity of minorities should be considered as an important factor, too. In case of Georgia, Tbilisi could treat Ossetians and Abkhazians as pro-Russian minority and proceeded with the "othering" of Russians. But in case of Ukraine, the antagonistic discourses of radical Ukrainian nationalists, which depicted the pro-Russian, anti-Western rhetoric of Yanukovich as Kremlin-orchestrated propaganda, failed. It was unacceptable for the wider public to accept the claim that half of the population of Ukraine, even the Russian-speaking one, were spies of the Kremlin.

Second, the internal configuration of new democracies should be considered: the evolution of democratic coalition, institutional set-up etc. Moreover, the evolution of the democratic opposition—once it comes to office—should be taken into account. In case of Georgia, the revolutionary trend has increased the risk of conflict. Charismatic personalities take over the power and are tempted to apply radical measures to solve the problems, which can lead to destabilization of bilateral relations in the region. The rest of the democratic opposition quite frequently applies revolutionary rhetoric and methods, which makes any pragmatist and cooperative dialogue more difficult. In case of Ukraine, the new democratic opposition is not a consolidated political force guided by a charismatic leader, but a loose network of various political parties and public movements, which, in their competition for power, are forced to look for new alliances and cooperation with other parties. This creates necessary preconditions for compromise, learning and non-violent, cooperative behavior and a persistence of the non-revolutionary political culture. The institutional set-up is also an important factor because if a democratic revolutionary elite comes to power through the presidential office, it has less incentives for dialogue and cooperation like in Georgia. In case of Ukraine, various competing actors of democratic opposition obtained positions in various executive and legislative positions with none of them exercising general control over the executive. This forced all the democratic actors to cooperate not only amongst each other, but also with their former antagonists.

Last but not the least, the evolution of former empires should be taken into account, because for many of the new independent states the empire remains a serious factor in policy-considerations and one of their favorite “Others” in public debates. Analysis of this factor can provide explanations to questions ranging from why certain security regimes were bound to fail and why the nation and state-building programs in new democratic states take one form or another.



## Ukraine—Stuck On The Way To Liberal Democracy?

*Eva Elfenkämper*

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, many observers hoped that freedom and democracy would soon be a reality for the people of Central and Eastern Europe and beyond. Developments in many countries in the post-Soviet area seemed to suggest that these hopes would see fruition. Ukraine apparently also followed this path: it started political reforms and gradually opened up its markets, and under President Leonid Kuchma signed its first agreements with EU and NATO.

Ukraine has gone through a phase of fundamental change and reform since independence, but it still needs more reforms to become a stable liberal democracy. The views on how democracy develops and what can be done by external stakeholders to assist are about as diverse as the phenomenon “democracy” itself.

One way to look at it is the transition approach, which looks at political processes and elite initiatives. This theory stresses the role of different actors and develops four phases of a historic pattern to explain how a transition to democracy works.

Democracy requires, first, a phase of “national unity” within a given territory. It does not require consensus, just a vague sense of community. Ukraine has had this in different historical movements as, for example, at the beginning of the 20th century and reaffirmed it in declaring its independence in 1990. Secondly, the country goes through an inconclusive political struggle. An indicator of this phase is a new elite that challenges the *status quo* which is defended by the old elite. The reorganizing of politics after independence is an example of such a struggle. Thirdly, there is a decision phase, a “historical moment.” This includes that the conflicting parties agree on some political, democratic framework which gives both fighting parties a role in it. Also in this respect, Ukraine, in the Orange Revolution, provides a very good example. Fourthly, the decision phase has to feed into a habituation phase to make democracy work. This means that people grow accustomed to democracy and accept it as a permanent state. It is also referred to as consolidation of democracy.

This last phase is in its essence an internal process, and different indicators can be taken as reference to measure this aspect: division of power, repartition of political and economic power, civil liberties etc. During the panel debate, we have been looking at three external stake-holders who have had a major influence on this process: the EU, NATO and Russia. The influence granted to these stakeholders is



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one of the aspects political camps constantly fight about, and in consequence this disagreement often hinders cooperation in other areas.

Ukraine never obtained a promise of EU accession, even though it has been seeking it for years. Many commentators argue that such a prospect might have triggered the ultimate swing towards liberal democracy. While the conditionality of the EU accession process certainly encourages state reform, it would also have involved technical and financial assistance to these crucial areas, which help the consolidation process. The EU, however, is looking for close ties with Ukraine without granting full inclusion, nevertheless the aim of EU membership is generally popular in Ukraine. EU membership is perceived as an acknowledgment of a successful transition to democracy, and therefore the EU should ensure continuous close ties with Ukraine, even if it does not give the full membership yet.

NATO is an external stakeholder, which is controversial in Ukraine. Ukraine and NATO's ties are institutionalized in the NATO-Ukraine Commission and are seen by both as an essential part of the Euro-Atlantic Integration.

While the cooperation of Ukraine with both organizations is to be welcomed and strengthened, it needs to be balanced with the respective political approach towards Russia. Russia still has strong business ties with Ukraine and the Russian fleet still has an important base in Crimea. While Ukraine's relationship with Russia is not free from tensions, it is part of Ukrainian reality, and the two will remain neighbors no matter what political direction either of them takes.

While Ukraine will join neither the EU nor NATO in the short term, it is important to maintain good relations with them and to include Russia. Russia will always remain Ukraine's largest neighbor and claim a role in Ukraine. Therefore, apart from continuing to promote the reform process in Ukraine and having a constructive cooperation with Ukraine directly, a key aspect to further democratic consolidation in Ukraine is a constructive cooperation of EU and NATO with Russia. It will be required in order to avoid additional strains to the internal reform process.



## Democratization through Conflict-prevention and Conflict-prevention through Democratization

Assessing the approaches of international organizations towards the improvement of interethnic relations in Macedonia from 1991–2008

*Tome Sandevski*



Tome Sandevski

The Republic of Macedonia was the only country from the former Yugoslav Republic to peacefully gain independence from socialist Yugoslavia in the 1990s. When violent conflicts erupted in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, many political and academic observers thought that Macedonia would be the next country in the Balkans to suffer from large-scale violence.

There was no shortage of political tensions and violent incidents between Macedonians and Albanians in the 1990s, which could have triggered large-scale ethnic violence. However, violent conflict did not occur until 2001, when a conflict between the Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) and Macedonian security forces pushed Macedonia to the brink of war. A diplomatic facilitation process between Macedonian and Albanian political parties led by the United States and the European Union resulted in the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in August 2001, which put an end to hostilities. The implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement was later facilitated and monitored by NATO, the OSCE, and the European Union. The Macedonian case is unique in that the international organizations which facilitated and monitored the Ohrid Framework Agreement were active in Macedonia long before the outbreak of the conflict in 2001. This paper explains the reasons for the success of preventive measures of international organizations in Macedonia.

The first organization to work on interethnic relations in Macedonia was the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia. The Working Group on Ethnic and National Minorities became active in Macedonia in December 1991. The working group facilitated talks between Albanian and Macedonian political parties, which resulted in the creation of additional Albanian language classes in high schools, the establishment of a television channel dedicated exclusively to broadcasts in minority languages, the use of the Albanian language in civil registration and ID cards, and an agreement to conduct an internationally monitored census in 1994.

The United Nations deployed the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Macedonia. The mission was mandated to monitor Macedonia's borders



with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Albania. The mission had to report any developments that could harm confidence and stability in Macedonia and monitored interethnic relations and human rights. It was the first time in the history of the United Nations that a preventive force was deployed to a country where a conflict had not yet erupted. UNPROFOR troops mediated several border incidents. In March 1995 the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) became UNPROFOR's successor in Macedonia. The mission was terminated in late February 1999 when China vetoed the extension of the mandate for another six months.

The CSCE launched the Spill-over Monitor Mission to Skopje in September 1992. The mission monitored developments at the borders of Serbia and established contacts with the Macedonian government, political parties and ordinary citizens. The High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Max van der Stoep, became active in Macedonia in the early 1990s, conducting 35 visits to Macedonia between 1993 and 1998.

Unlike Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, ethnic tensions did not result in large-scale conflict in Macedonia in the 1990s. How can this be explained? Apparently, both Macedonian and Albanian political elites were receptive to conflict preventive measures by international actors. Albanians suffered several grievances in Macedonia, but their status was still much better than the status of minorities in other parts of the former Yugoslavia. The situation of Albanians was in no way comparable to the Serbian apartheid regime in Kosovo, which had excluded Albanians from public institutions since 1989. The constitutional and social status of Albanians was also far better than the situation of ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe or the Baltic states during the 1990s. Compared to Serbian and Croatian nationalism, Macedonian nationalism was relatively moderate. Likewise, radical ideas and political forces did not enjoy the support of the majority of Albanians in Macedonia. This was also due to intra-ethnic party competition in Macedonia.

The Macedonian Social Democratic Union formed a government coalition with the Albanian Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) between 1992 and 1998. This coalition was succeeded by a coalition between the hard-line Macedonian VMRO-DPMNE and the radical Albanian Democratic Party for Integration between 1998 and 2002.

Fights between the NLA and Macedonian security forces took place until August 2001. According to UNHCR data, some 140,000 people became displaced during

the conflict. About 90,000 persons fled to neighboring Kosovo and Serbia, while 50,000 people became internally-displaced persons. For six months Macedonia was at the brink of large scale ethnic-war. Yet, in contrast to Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo, the international community became involved in the conflict at a very early stage. NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson and the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, Javier Solana, travelled to Macedonia several times in the spring of 2001. The EU appointed François Léotard as special envoy to Macedonia as the European counterpart to the US special envoy James Perdue. International pressure resulted in the creation of a grand coalition of the two biggest Macedonian political parties (SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE) and the two biggest Albanian political parties (PDP, DPA) in May 2001.

Prior to the conclusion of the negotiations in Ohrid, the representatives of the EU, NATO and the United States had put tremendous pressure on the Macedonian government not to declare a state of war and general mobilization. In addition, NATO troops closely monitored the operations of the Macedonian security forces. The EU, NATO and the US put pressure on the Macedonian government to deter large-scale military operations and the use of heavy artillery against Albanian insurgents and civilians.



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The Ohrid Framework Agreement, which put an end to the hostilities between Albanian insurgents and Macedonian security forces, was signed by the two major Macedonian (SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE) and Albanian (DPA, PDP) political parties. It featured a set of drastic constitutional changes: First, the Agreement foresaw the development of a decentralized state. A new law regarding local self-government was to be drafted and implemented, which would provide municipalities with increased competencies in the fields of public services, urban and rural planning, environmental protection, local economic development, culture, local finances, education, social welfare, and health care. Second, the Framework Agreement included articles on the provision of equitable representation of ethnic minorities in state institutions. Third, it established a double majority requirement—the so-called Badinter principle—for the adoption of laws directly affecting the issues of culture, use of language, education, personal documentation, and use of symbols, as well as laws on local finances, local elections, the city of Skopje, and boundaries of municipalities. Fourth, the Agreement enhanced the status of minority languages.

Between August 2001 and March 2003, NATO operated three missions in Macedonia, which were followed by Operation Concordia. These missions monitored the collection of voluntarily surrendered weapons and provided protection for international observers.

The Macedonian case differs from the previous engagement in the former republic of Socialist Yugoslavia in several ways. Most importantly, the Macedonian government wanted to join NATO and the European Union. The Partnership for Peace and the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) were already being planned in order to promote the long-term integration of Macedonia into these two organizations. In contrast to Serbia or Croatia during the 1990s, the Macedonian government was very susceptible to external pressures. It was not interested in being isolated from the West. Macedonia had the long-term prospect of joining the European Union and NATO. Macedonia signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement in April 2001 when first clashes had already happened in Tetovo. The three Stabilization and Association reports by the European Commission monitored the implementation of the Framework Agreement between 2001 and 2002.

The pre-war operations of international organizations in Macedonia laid the groundwork for the quick intervention in 2001. Moreover, after a decade of diplomatic, military and humanitarian involvement in the former Yugoslavia, international organizations could take advantage of the expertise of numerous

staff members, who had gained work experience on the ground. Thus, Macedonia offered very favorable conditions for an external intervention. International organizations supplemented each other in Macedonia, which is why Macedonia is often cited as a successful application of the concept of interlocking institutions.

Macedonia is a unique case to the extent that virtually all of the governments involved were very receptive to the influence of international organizations and Western governments. Neither the Macedonian political parties nor the Albanian political parties had the support of external actors, which could have actively spoiled interethnic relations in Macedonia. The creation of the National Liberation Army by former KLA fighters was an exception to this. However, the NLA leadership decided to disband the NLA and form a political party. This process was facilitated by Macedonia's prospects of joining the European Union and NATO. Also, when Macedonia signed the Ohrid Agreement, it was ahead of Kosovo and Albania in terms of relations with the European Union.

In no other case of ethnic violence in Eastern Europe did the implementation of a peace agreement coincide with the process of pre-accession to the European Union. Both Macedonian and Albanian political elites shared the same goals in terms of full membership in the European Union. In this regard, the Macedonian case can only serve as an example for stabilizing interethnic relations in other post-socialist countries to a very limited extent.



## The European Union in Kosovo—Credibility and Influence at Stake

*Pascal Fendrich*

More than a year after Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence, the situation in Kosovo remains uncertain. Following Serbia's and Russia's oppositions, the Ahtisaari Plan, which was expected to set a final status for Kosovo and provide a clear road-map for its implementation, was not adopted by the United Nations (UN) Security Council. Moreover, the EU currently remains divided on the question of independence. Whereas independence is presented as irreversible<sup>1</sup> by some EU Member States, others still oppose such recognition in the absence of an agreed settlement. Despite these internal divergences, the EU nevertheless emerges as a key actor for the coming period. The promise of EU membership for Kosovo in the long term as well as the decision to create EULEX and to appoint an EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Kosovo reflects both the central role and the long term responsibilities it has itself committed to. These developments have, in parallel, generated expectations from Kosovo's authorities and population that the EU will support the country's development and even help it make sovereignty a reality.

Three distinct but complementary aspects are crucial to assess the EU's potential to successfully channel the reforms necessary for Kosovo's stability and development: Firstly, the EU's short term priorities in Kosovo and how they relate to one another. The way intra-EU divisions impact on the definition of these priorities plays a significant role in this respect. Secondly, the EU's presence on the ground in Kosovo and the current inconsistencies of the institutional network currently in place in Kosovo. And thirdly, the question of the EU's longer term influence in Kosovo.

Overall, some worrying conclusions can be drawn regarding the EU's present and future potential to bring about stability and development in Kosovo. While theoretically endowed with a sort of "double-conditionality," the first one being attached to monitoring Kosovo's post-status developments in the short run and the other linked with Kosovo's longer term EU membership perspective, the analysis shows that current circumstances may critically impact on the Union's long term influence.

<sup>1</sup> The French President is for example reported to have recently described Kosovo's independence as irreversible. See: Kosovo Media Monitor, UNMIK, 21-2-2008. Even the former EU representative to the troika, Wolfgang Ischinger, was also recently reported to have said the status of Kosovo is definitely solved. See Kosovo Media Monitor, UNMIK, 12-2-2008.



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### The EU's objectives

While persisting divergences among member states on the question of independence prevent the EU from officially supporting independence and from promoting measures that would make sovereignty a reality, the December 2007 European Council conclusions<sup>2</sup> as well as the two joint actions of February 2008<sup>3</sup> nevertheless provide a clear idea about the EU's agenda. Stability, with an emphasis on avoiding internal multi-ethnic tensions—that could in addition have negative spill-over effects in the region—seems to emerge as the primary objective for the Union. This need for stability is accentuated by the remaining uncertainties concerning Kosovo's final status, where communities are still competing to define the state to which they belong and its structure. The declaration of Kosovo's independence furthermore resulted in a legal chaos north of the Ibar River where courts and customs controls temporarily stopped operating.<sup>4</sup> These events challenge the EU security agenda and imply the necessity to ensure or re-establish stable institutions and the rule of law.

Besides stability as an objective of paramount importance, the EU is furthermore committed to promote Kosovo's multi-ethnic character, including measures that will instill confidence across communities. Doubts persist, however, concerning the feasibility and stabilizing effects of such measures. It needs to be recalled that following NATO's intervention in 1999, security and stability were in practice achieved through physical separation of the communities. In this sense, the EU has been faced with already established realities and equilibria on the ground. The absence of an agreed settlement on Kosovo adds another layer of difficulties in this context. The uncertainties attached to the final status of Kosovo may indeed diminish each community's readiness for compromise. Furthermore, if concrete steps towards independence are not taken, Kosovo's institutions' commitment to implement measures designed to protect the rights of the Kosovo Serbs community may soon vanish in the fear of their efforts not being rewarded.

The above observations and this emphasis on stability furthermore carry significant consequences for European efforts in the field of economic development and democratization. While both processes clearly feature as priorities on the EU's agenda, the persisting relevance of security concerns implies a delay for the

2 European Council, Presidency Conclusions, 16616/07, Brussels, 14-12-2007.

3 Council of the European Union, Council Joint Action (2008/124/CFSP) on the European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, EULEX KOSOVO, Official Journal of the European Union, L 42, 16-2-2008, pp. 92–98, and Council of the European Union, Council Joint Action (2008/123/CFSP) of 4 February 2008 on appointing a European Union Special Representative in Kosovo, in: Official Journal of the European Union, L 42, 16-2-2008, pp. 88–91.

4 See for example: Kosovo's Fragile Transition, op. cit., p. 5, or Human Rights, Ethnic Relations and Democracy in Kosovo (Summer 2007–Summer 2008), op. cit., p. 5.



two objectives. As a matter of fact, in the absence of an agreement on the structure and nature of the state to be built, democratization efforts can only remain incomplete. In the economic realm, recent analyses have also underlined that the potential instability of Kosovo has for the time being prevented foreign direct investment to take place.<sup>5</sup>

#### Mapping the EU's presence in Kosovo

There are inherent contradictions in the institutional set-up currently in place in Kosovo. While not an EU organization as such, the International Civilian Office (ICO) was initially expected to be the central institution in Kosovo's post-independence phase and intended to supervise its final settlement. This initial objective is still visible in the design of the institution. The organization is headed by an International Civilian Representative (ICR) that holds authoritative powers. However, and as it finds its origins in the Ahtisaari proposal, not all EU Member States currently support the efforts of the ICO. In these circumstances, the merging of the ICR with the position of the EUSR entails significant problems. With the ICR expected to support measures that would make Kosovo's independence a reality, the EUSR is currently not in a position to do so. The head of the ICO thereby holds two diverging mandates which may in the future clash with one another.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance: Lavdim Hamidi, Foreign Investors Shun Turbulent Kosovo, in: BalkanInsight.com, 2-2-2009, <<http://balkaninsight.com/en/main/analysis/16376/>> (24-2-2009).



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Such a dual mandate of the ICR/EUSR may carry important risks for the comprehension and reception of both the ICO and the EU actions and discourses.

Furthermore, the mandate of EULEX appears problematic in the current context. Initially thought to replace the United Nations Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and support Kosovo's institutions in the aftermath of the independence (in the field of customs, justice or police for instance), current EU divisions have resulted in the EULEX mandate being defined as status neutral. In such a context, the EU mission cannot officially coordinate its efforts with the ICO and its exact room for manoeuvre regarding Kosovo's institutions remains to be more precisely defined. The potential of the European Commission as an actor is also left to some uncertainties. While it is expected to make use of community tools to promote the economic development of Kosovo as well as to further its process of European integration, it remains unclear how the Commission can best fulfil this task. As enlargement related community tools are designed for states and are subject to unanimity in the Council for their activation, the Commission appears to be left without the appropriate tools to carry out its mission.

Finally, and in the absence of any UN Security Council resolution revoking or modifying resolution 1244, UNMIK formally stays in place and cohabits with the institutions set up to supervise Kosovo's post-independence period. Despite its persisting legal legitimacy, UNMIK seems to have significantly lost its leverage on the ground.

Altogether, both the EU and the international presence in Kosovo are problematic and inconsistent. The EU's "actorness" emerges as dispersed across various institutions with differing mandates, leaving the former unable to deliver a clear message. Furthermore, the current architecture in place reveals the absence of a clear leadership on the ground, with the EU falling short of the expectations.

Implications for the EU's longer term influence

The identified shortcomings may well impact on the EU's longer term influence in Kosovo. The current conditions and lessons learned from previous EU involvements put in question the EU's potential to emerge as an influential actor in Kosovo. With its presence divided among various institutions, the EU is currently unable to present a united front and convey a clear message to Kosovo's institutions and population regarding the future development of the province. The current intra-EU divergences clearly inhibit the formulation and clarity of the EU's objectives.

While the EU appears to have been insufficiently prepared to take on its new responsibilities in Kosovo, its commitment and the creation of EULEX have nevertheless generated expectations on the side of Kosovo's authorities and population, who are now waiting for concrete measures to promote Kosovo's political and economic development. Given the present circumstances, however, the EU is unable to express a precise road-map to secure both independence and sustainability of the new state. The lack of coherence of EU actions and the potential misfit between its capability to act and the expectations it has created may result in the questioning of the credibility of its commitment.<sup>6</sup> Instead of benefiting from the Union's support, Kosovo's institutions are on the contrary facing the threat of seeing their efforts not rewarded. Persisting uncertainties about the EU's final word on the question of independence may well alter Pristina's strategic calculations and priorities and could further contribute to distance Kosovo and its political agenda from its European future. If Kosovo's European aspirations are answered with nothing more than a long term rhetorical commitment and a vague road-map, Kosovo's authorities and population might slowly change their perception of the EU and its policy. The current situation does not only fuel doubts about the EU's capacity to support Kosovo's development, let alone independence, but also puts into question the political will to reach the objectives it had itself rhetorically committed to in the first place.

More than a year after its declared independence, the future prospects of Kosovo as well as the EU's contribution to its stability and development remain uncertain. Intra-EU divisions, the current confusions surrounding its objectives and its limited room for manoeuvre on the ground combined with the expectations it has generated not only severely endanger the credibility of its action and erode its leverage in Kosovo, but could also negatively impact on the EU as an actor in crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction in general.

<sup>6</sup> The direct link between the EU's leverage and the credibility of its commitment is widely emphasized in the literature. See for instance: Solveig Richter and Dusan Reljic, *Credibility and Compliance: The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy Risks Forfeiting its Leverage in the Western Balkans* (SWP Comments 32, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik), Berlin, December 2008.



## Supporting the Stabilization and Democratization Processes in the South Caucasus: What Lessons Can Be Learnt from the Western Balkans?

*Dominik Tolsdorf*

With the war in Georgia in August 2008, the South Caucasus region came into the international spotlight. The European Union addresses the region with different EU Commission instruments (that were complemented by the Eastern Partnership in May 2009) and in the framework of its CFSP. The EU has been heavily involved in the Western Balkans in the last decade and has thus gained much experience in supporting stabilization and democratization processes in a fragile region in its neighborhood. It can be assumed that it will also get more involved in the South Caucasus region, where some political factors are similar to the Western Balkans, among them unsettled status issues, unfinished state-building processes and the need for reforms (particularly in the security sector).<sup>1</sup>

Although the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus are hardly comparable,<sup>2</sup> at least when it comes to the involvement of the EU, it can be assumed that similar strategies will be pursued and foreign policy instruments deployed. Therefore, it is useful to identify some lessons from the Western Balkans for the South Caucasus. Crucial issues in this respect are 1) the independence process of Kosovo and the EU's role in it and 2) the process of police restructuring in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These two examples will demonstrate that the European foreign policy has lacked consistent strategies towards the Western Balkans, which prevented the EU from achieving satisfactory outcomes in its neighborhood.



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- <sup>1</sup> There are many indications for this notion. To support the "Six-Point Agreement" of September 2008, the Council decided to deploy a civilian monitoring mission (EUMM) in Georgia whose long-term goal is "to contribute to stability throughout Georgia and the surrounding region." While the European Security Strategy of December 2003 had already stated that the EU "should now take a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the Southern Caucasus" "the report on its implementation of December 2008 explicitly alludes to Georgia when it states that "the EU has increasingly made a difference in addressing crisis and conflict." A resolution of the European Parliaments' plenary session on 19-2-2009 concluded that the events in Georgia in August 2008 had shown the need for the clear presence of the EU in the countries of its Eastern neighborhood (see Bulletin Quotidien Europe, No. 9845, 21-2-2009, p. 4). These examples demonstrate that there is the ambition in Brussels that the EU should get more engaged in the region in order to support various reform processes (e.g. the reform of the armed forces, police and gendarmerie, intelligence services or judicial and penal institutions). It is therefore not unrealistic to assume that the EU will for this purpose deploy further "technical" ESDP missions in the region.
- <sup>2</sup> Also the reasons for the EU to get involved in both regions are not comparable. For example in the 1990's, a main factor for the European attempts to intervene in the Western Balkans was to avoid the flow of refugees. This factor is certainly not that very relevant when it comes to the European involvement in the South Caucasus. See also Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Vom Balkan in den Kaukasus, 10-3-2009, p. 6.

### The European Union's Problems in Addressing Status Issues: The Example of Kosovo

With the establishment of the UN interim administration mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the support of various international organizations, a state-building process began in the former Serbian province in June 1999. After its declaration of independence in February 2008, Kosovo had been recognized by 60 states (including 22 EU member states) in June 2009, which have argued that Kosovo is a case *sui generis*. Mainly for fears of strong minorities within their own borders that might also demand greater autonomy rights, or contestations of their own statehood, EU members Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Greece and Cyprus (and many other non-European states) rejected to acknowledge Kosovo as an independent state. The fact that the international community is divided on the issue represents a major impediment to an effective EU foreign policy in Kosovo as it limits its operational possibilities as envisaged in the Ahtisaari plan.<sup>3</sup> Since the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 1999 is still in force, the International Civil-ian Office (ICO), which was to completely supersede UNMIK according to the Ahtisaari proposal, can only supervise the Kosovo-Albanian authorities. While UNMIK, which has adjusted to the new realities in Kosovo by reconfiguring its mandate, concentrates on non-Albanian communities in Kosovo, the Kosovo-Albanians try to configure the state according to the provisions that originate from the Ahtisaari plan (whose provisions are enshrined in Kosovo's constitution of April 2008). The ICO thus contributes to the de facto partition of Kosovo into two parallel societies.

Although divided over the legality of Kosovo's independence, the EU member states agreed on the deployment of the EU rule of law mission EULEX in Kosovo. However, Russia only agreed to the EULEX in the framework of UN-SCR 1244. Thus, EULEX has to act "status neutral" and not according to the Ahtisaari plan. Because of the operational limits of the ICO and EULEX, the EU has never gained the degree of influence on the developments in Kosovo as was initially envisaged. The EU had to gradually reduce its ambitions and to begin to assess its possibilities in Kosovo more realistically. Finally, "the West", in the long run, will have to admit that Kosovo is unlikely to become the multi-ethnic state that it was supposed to become according to the Ahtisaari plan.

As the Russian government has for long warned "Western" governments that their recognition of Kosovo's independence would have serious ramifications for other regions in the world, it was no surprise that Moscow acknowledged the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in September 2008. If the EU becomes

<sup>3</sup> The official term is "Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement," see <<http://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/Comprehensive%20Proposal%20.pdf>>.

more active in the South Caucasus region, it will have to deal with these territorial issues. Membership ambitions, particularly by Georgia and to a certain degree also by Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the different Commission programs give the Union some leverage over the governments in the South Caucasus. If implemented effectively these could help the EU become a mediator in the resolution of “frozen conflicts” in the region. While the EU will not be able to effectively mediate in all status conflicts in the region,<sup>4</sup> it should get more involved in the conflict resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh, a clearly unified position on these territorial issues by all member states being a necessary precondition. Successful mediation would finally enable the EU (and other players) to more effectively support reform processes in the region.<sup>5</sup> In this respect, the EU can revert to lessons from the Western Balkans. The police reform process in Bosnia and Herzegovina represents an example of a rather inconsistent form of support by the EU.

#### EU Support for Reform Processes: the Example of Police Restructuring in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Due to the complex post-war situation and the constitutional order created by the Dayton Agreement in 1995, reform processes are a sensible topic in Bosnia and

<sup>4</sup> It is very unlikely that the EU will be able to mediate in conflict resolution in South Ossetia and as it does not have any leverage on both entities.

<sup>5</sup> It can be assumed that the settling of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will foster further democratization of Armenia and Azerbaijan that will lead to various reform processes.



German and Macedonian perspectives on Lessons Learned in the Balkans

Herzegovina, and the latest major effort to reform the constitutional structure failed in spring 2006. Despite the fact that the restructuring of the Bosnian police touches this constitutional order, the rather pro-active High Representative Paddy Ashdown was able to convince decision-makers in Brussels to include three principles for police restructuring into the catalogue of the EU's conditions for signing a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA).<sup>6</sup> Besides the condition that there is no political interference with operational policing, two of the principles basically envisaged to strengthen the central structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to weaken the entity levels. From the beginning, these principles were controversial not only among Bosnians (mainly the Bosnian Serb parties) but also among international actors engaged in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European Commission initially argued that a police model based on such principles could not be considered a EU requirement as it could not be derived from the *acquis communautaire*, and that also some member states had decentralized police structures. After years of debate, it became clear that there was no chance to convince all Bosnian parties to implement these principles. Following a critical crisis between the High Representative and Bosnian Serb politicians in autumn 2007, Bosnian party leaders agreed on the principles for police reform.<sup>7</sup> These reforms, however, were to be implemented in the framework of the existing constitution, thus respecting the competences of the two entities. In the absence of alternatives, the High Representative Miroslav Lajčák had to revise and to redraw the ambitious "EU standards."<sup>8</sup> Pressure also came from policy circles in Brussels, which argued that in the context of the difficult regional circumstances—Kosovo's independence was to be solved soon—the EU integration process was more important than the adherence to the three principles. In the end, the EU gave up on its police principles, hoping that they would be implemented together with constitutional reform as a merely technical issue. This finally allowed for the Bosnian House of Representatives to approve a police reform in April 2008 and Bosnia and Herzegovina to sign the SAA with the EU in June 2008. In the course of the police reform, the EU's conditionality has lost much of its credibility as it was no longer impartial but open to political negotiations.<sup>9</sup>

6 See Paddy Ashdown, *Swords and Ploughshares. Bringing peace to the 21st Century*, London 2007, p. 249.

7 See Mostar Declaration on Police Reform, 29-10-2007, <<http://www.eusrbih.eu/policy-docs/?cid=2109,1,1>>.

8 Some officials argue that the principles should not have been termed as "EU principles" but rather as "EU principles for Bosnia", Interviews with EU officials, Sarajevo, June 2008.

9 According to a Bosnian official, when it comes the three policing principles, it was "very unwise from the EU to put the bar that high but then to constantly trigger it down. It created a very bad atmosphere in the RS, where EU conditionality is considered as relative today. Many politicians from the RS think that many of the tasks included in the European Partnership can be diluted in the course of the association process." In fact, since signing the SAA, there has not been any progress in any reform field in Bosnia. Interview with Bosnian official, Sarajevo, August 2008.



## Conclusion

These brief examples demonstrate that a clearly unified position on territorial issues among all EU member states is a necessary precondition if the EU is to become more and effectively involved in the South Caucasus. In addition, the EU policies will have to be coordinated with other relevant international actors in the region such as the U.S., Russia and international organizations like the UN. Unfortunately, by imposing “Western” solutions to complex issues in the Western Balkans and by rather ignoring the concerns of those countries that have opposed Kosovo’s independence, instruments like the ICO contribute to the *de facto* partition of Kosovo. The case of Kosovo is a striking example how the EU’s impact on the developments in the given countries remains limited if the conditions of unified EU positions and the respect for the positions of other relevant actors are not fulfilled.

However, if the EU avoids addressing territorial issues in the South Caucasus (for example the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict) it might face operational limitations when engaging in reform processes. As was demonstrated with the example of police restructuring in Bosnia and Herzegovina, if the EU wants to have impact on reform processes, maintain its conditionality and credibility and aspires to be perceived as a capable foreign policy actor, it should from the very beginning define and implement a coherent strategy towards the region including clear goals that will not be subject of change and political games over time.



## A Comment on Democracy and Security in the Western Balkans

*Bianca Jinga*<sup>1</sup>

Following the enlargement of the EU to include the Central and Eastern European (CEE) states, the process of “democratization” became synonymous with EU accession when applied to a European state. Built on the experience of integrating the new member states, the EU is perceived as the repository of an ultimate panacea for curing the ills of bad governance and under-development. In addition to that, as a corollary to the democratic peace theory, “democratization” became closely associated with strengthening security. In practice, the CEE states joined NATO first, and then the EU, after having met the criteria for membership which set clear benchmarks for the implementation of democratic reforms. Equating democracy with EU membership and security has had implications for the Western Balkans in at least two ways: on the one hand the countries of the region expect that the successful implementation of democratic reforms will lead more or less automatically to EU membership; on the other hand, the EU expects that by supporting democratic reforms it will implicitly foster security in the region.

While being different in nature and approaches, the three papers of the panel complement each other, offering a comprehensive overview of the situation in the Western Balkans: Sandevski’s paper undertakes a sound assessment of seventeen years of international involvement in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.<sup>2</sup> Fendrich focuses on the EU’s multi-level engagement in Kosovo and Tolsdorf analyses the EU’s involvement in Kosovo and Bosnia in order to draw possible lessons learned for a potentially deeper engagement in the South Caucasus. The topics chosen are not just academically challenging, but have significant policy implications, as the EU is indeed expected to be a more assertive actor on the international scene. Some core assumptions underpinning all three contributions deserve however some scrutiny.

Firstly, the relationship between promotion of democracy and EU membership is a two way street. Notwithstanding the importance of the know-how and expertise the EU has developed, as well as of its impressive resources (financial and human), assessing the effectiveness of the EU’s transformational power also needs to include the candidate countries and their will and commitment to transforming their societies. The EU’s assistance counted for a great deal in making the bid for



Bianca Jinga

<sup>1</sup> The views expressed are those of the author only.

<sup>2</sup> From now on referred to by its constitutional name, «Macedonia», as the author of the study does.

membership by the CEE countries which eventually joined the Union a successful process. However, it was their genuine desire to join the league of liberal democracies with functional market economies, and their perseverance in implementing rather painful economic and social reforms, which ultimately made EU membership possible.

Macedonia's success story in defusing an inter-ethnic conflict in the making by implementing democratic reforms is as much a consequence of international involvement, in which the EU played an important role, as it is a consequence of a series of policy decisions taken by internal actors: both Macedonian and ethnic Albanian political elites shared the goal of EU membership, they were both receptive to the influence of international actors and they agreed to integrate the ethnic Albanian parties in mainstream political life. Had the efforts of the EU (and other international organizations) not been met by the genuine aspiration of the internal actors to normalize inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia, it is unlikely that the prospect of EU membership alone could have led to the same result. The EU can provide valuable expertise and financial support, but cannot, by itself, "democratize" a country.

Secondly, EU membership may not necessarily contribute to conflict resolution. It is important to identify transferable "lessons learned" from the Western Balkans for a possible deeper EU engagement in the South Caucasus. Both regions are



Deconstructing the Balkans

characterized by “unsettled status issues” and “unfinished state-building” processes and the EU may find itself conducting accession negotiations with states that may not be recognized either by all of its members, or by some of the potential member states (Tolksdorf). One common assumption is that the prospect of EU membership for the countries of the Western Balkans (and possibly the South Caucasus) would positively contribute to conflict resolution. It is important, however, to keep in mind that the theory has failed its only test drive so far, when Cyprus joined the Union as a divided country.

A third assumption which may be revisited is that, without a status settlement, democratization leads to the integration of ethnic communities because of a fair distribution of power between them. Although counterintuitive, the opposite seems to be validated by reality: the ethnic vote both in Bosnia and Kosovo has deepened the gap between the communities, legitimizing a de-facto separation, negatively impacting on the security of the region.

To conclude, prior to looking for “lessons learned”, one needs to revisit some basic assumptions, in order to be able to separate theory from facts and to insulate the transferable elements underpinning policy recommendations: the EU can provide a lot of valuable help, but it is up to the recipient countries to make use of and to pursue the process of democratic transformation. EU membership in itself cannot substitute for conflict resolution, and without a political solution to unsettled status issues, democratization does not necessarily foster security.



## ENP and post-Soviet Transition in the South Caucasus: Triangulating Democracy, Security and Stability

*Maria Raquel Freire and Licínia Simão*

The Southern Caucasus, including Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, is a heterogeneous region, demonstrating different political and institutional stages of development, distinct political cultures, and disparate paths in their transition courses towards democracy. These countries' relationships with and towards the European Union (EU) have raised numerous interrogations about the applicability, sustainability and viability of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in its format, as well as its ability to address regional security concerns, both from each of these countries' and the EU's perspective. We argue that the specificities of the "region," along with the international context where the area's relationships take place, affect and have effect in the transition course in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, questioning the reach of the ENP model as it is defined and rendered operational. The paper recognizes that the process of democratic transition is not linear, homogeneous or irreversible, and it is argued that transition must be understood in the interconnection of the macro and micro levels of analysis. This encompassing framework of analysis allows for a triangulation of democracy, security and stability, grasping how these concepts interrelate and are mutually affected, with implications for their implementation.

### The EU—an International Security Actor

The EU, as a security community, shares a set of values and norms built on a soft and multilateral approach to security. These soft security areas, where the EU has increasingly been gaining relevance, are fundamental as a basis for the Union's involvement at the global level, and for its attempts to export its security and normative models beyond its borders. These include fostering stability and promoting democratization processes in its neighborhood. In this way, by a process of gradual socialization of security approaches, meaning a set of norms and values allowing an approximation to EU policies, it aims at endorsing an enlarged security community in its still much uncertain neighborhood.

In view of the 2004 enlargement, the EU debated the issue of avoiding division lines in Europe by promoting regional frameworks for cooperation with the neighbors, leading to the development of the ENP. The institutional discourse recognizes the danger of erecting new "walls" in Europe, if the benefits of enlargement are not shared with the neighbors to the East. The EU is thus pursuing



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a new preventive hands-on approach that is meant to assure the security, stability, and prosperity of the wider European space, without further enlarging the Union. However, the EU has revealed great difficulties in developing a coherent approach towards the Eastern neighborhood, sustaining its claim to being more than a regional and economic player, whose approach presents advantages in securing peace and stability in the world. It rests on the Neighborhood Policy to prove that the EU can develop an encompassing framework of relations with its European neighbors, which is responsive, both to their expectations and the EU's current challenges and limitations.

#### The EU and the South Caucasus

The dismemberment of the Soviet Union had a profound impact on the politico-strategic policies of the Caucasus: new states have emerged along with new opportunities and problems. The collapse of the artificial unity resulting from the Soviet ruling power unleashed old disagreements that, in several places, escalated into armed confrontation. Both of an intrastate and inter-state nature, the secessionist conflicts within Georgia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh have been sources of instability in a much disputed region. This context of instability is further aggravated by not only the proliferation of illegal practices, but also the involvement of external actors, such as the Russian Federation. While in the early 1990s Russia took the lead in the management of the conflicts, today, the lack of visible results beyond the existing fragile cease-fires, to which the war in Georgia in the summer of 2008 further added, has raised concerns that the *status quo* might be jeopardizing local and regional development.

Broadly speaking, the EU's approach to the South Caucasus has been a regional one, recognizing it as a central step in the economic development of the neighborhood. However, this approach has been met by an objective differentiation in positioning their countries by Tbilisi, Yerevan and Baku. Thus, the EU contribution to regional development through conflict settlement and the implementation of democratic reforms should not be a linear and rigid process, but a multi-layered and adjustable one. Nevertheless, the question whether the EU has the means and the political will necessary to implement such a flexible strategy, and whether the Action Plans in the context of the Neighborhood Policy might be effective instruments for accomplishing the Union's goals for the Southern Caucasus, remains to be seen.

The EU's holistic approach to security and stability in the South Caucasus has so far been unable to shift local actors' perceptions about their interests and potential gains from engaging in regional cooperation and eventually reprioritizing foreign policy goals (the so-called EU's transformative power). The most important event in changing local perceptions has been the brief war over South Ossetia in August 2008. Russia's actions in the South Caucasus led to a reassessment of the existing *status quo*, proving that Moscow remains a central actor in this region; one with whom the EU has been unable to coordinate its actions. Although the slow but constant shift of interests towards the West (EU and NATO) has not been averted by Moscow's military intervention in South Ossetia, it illustrated the constraints affecting these countries' foreign and domestic policy choices.

The inclusion of the Southern Caucasus countries in the ENP came late in the process, with the slow implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) and the lack of progress in conflict settlement and regional cooperation prompting a policy review. Behind the decision to include the three South Caucasian countries into the ENP lay several important factors, including the presence of new advocates for the EU's interests in the region, after the 2004 enlargement; Georgia's peaceful "rose revolution" and its pro-western foreign orientation; the inauguration of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline; and recognition of the strategic importance of addressing regional instability in the South Caucasus, in the context of the ENP initiative, underlined by the 2003 European Security Strategy. The period of negotiations of the Action Plans, from 2004 to 2006, was marked by close cooperation and increased financial assistance between the EU and the South Caucasian countries. The EU appointed a Special Representative for the South Caucasus in 2003, and in July 2004 the first EU Rule of Law Mission was deployed to Georgia, demonstrating growing political willingness for a stronger EU presence in the area. From a period of neglect on the part of the EU, the South Caucasus, and Georgia in particular, became an example of the EU's proactive attitude in its neighborhood.

Overview: Triangulating Democracy, Security and Stability in the Neighborhood

The EU understands stability inside its borders as lying primarily within democratic regimes, guided by the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, while simultaneously sustaining peaceful relations with other states at the regional and international level. The rule, however, is far from being a linear co-relation between democracy and stability. If, in the long-term, democracy effectively allows grievances in society to be addressed in a non-violent way, creating opportunities for self-development and social progress; in the short-term,

democracy entails processes of power dispute that peacefully accept the outcome of popular referenda. The exclusive reliance on electoral processes to assess the levels of democratic development enhance the focus on short-term strategies to gain access to power, by seemingly democratic means. Naturally, the outcome can—and often has been—electoral-related violence, resistance to power shifts and destabilization of countries in transition.

The challenge for the EU thus remains to coordinate its values with its security interests in the neighborhood, without contradicting them. Partly, the suggestion implicit in the ENP is that only by merging the two approaches can the EU have a long-term impact in stabilizing its neighborhood. That is, only through democratic reforms can the conditions for structural security take root. By shaping the political environment in accordance with its own image, the EU is setting the foundations for more peaceful and stable relations, but this process is neither linear nor irreversible, demanding that the EU accounts for the short-term needs of its partners, as well as continued and impartial support for genuine reforms, without relying too far on rhetoric action.

The stated EU goal to become a pole of attraction to its eastern neighbors must be understood in the context of the competing forces in action in the broad space of Eurasia. The divergent EU, US and Russian approaches to security and stability in Eurasia have imprinted on the region a renewed competition for influence that does not bode well for peace and security. The Southern Caucasus countries constitute a visible and urgent element of a wider engagement of the EU, in particular regarding the definition, implementation and consolidation of a carefully crafted policy towards its eastern neighborhood. However, the conciliation of interests within an EU at 27 states remains a challenge. Despite energy issues being an essential aspect of EU policies, the Caspian basin only recently became central in EU attempts to diversify supplies; despite EU concern over the conflicts of the region, its presence on the negotiations has been limited; despite the recognition that regional cooperation in the South Caucasus is essential to find a political solution to the conflicts, to build trust, and to develop a common basis for cooperation and development, the task of transforming divergent visions in a convergence of interests seems almost unattainable.

## Conflicts in the South Caucasus and their Impact on Democratization

*Anar Valiyev*

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and emergence of new republics, scholars have been arguing that democratization is the major tool for solving inter-ethnic or so-called frozen conflicts.<sup>1</sup> The proponents of the democratic peace theory championed the idea that a solution for any conflict or war could not be achieved without the prior democratization of the respective conflict parties. These scholars claimed that the risks of war (or re-emergence of war) were reduced by democratization and exacerbated by set-backs or even reversals in the democratization process. Several case studies of countries that managed to solve an inter-ethnic or other domestic conflict through a process of democratization seemed to support this theory. Thus, the so-called causality between democratization and conflict resolution was established.

However, there is little research on the possibility that conflict resolution in autocratic countries can lead to democratization of the respective regimes or, put differently, that the processes of democratization and conflict resolution can also work in reversed order. Longevity of the conflict and the possibility of a resurgence of frozen conflicts make societies susceptible to the idea of halting further democratization for security reasons. Some authors suggest that, in fact, in countries with weak political institutions and low political culture, democratization could increase the risk of war or internal destabilization.<sup>2</sup> In addition, literature on favorable conditions for successful transition from autocratic structures to a democratic system heavily draws on the outcomes of democratization processes in South America, Southern Europe and the former communist states in Central and Eastern Europe. Summarizing some of the main findings on democratization in various regions, one of the central conditions for a successful and peaceful transition from autocracy to democracy seems to be the settlement of national and state status questions.<sup>3</sup> In the South Caucasus, a settlement of these questions



Anar Valiyev

- 1 Svante E. Cornell, Autonomy as a Source of Conflict: Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective, in: World Politics, No. 2/2002, pp. 245–276, and Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, Democratization and the Danger of War, in: International Security, No. 1/1995, pp. 5–38.
- 2 Lutz Krebs, Dominic Senn, Judith Vorrath, Linking Ethnic Conflict and Democratization: An Assessment of Four Troubled Regions (National Center of Competence in Research, Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century, University of Zurich, Working Paper No. 6) Zurich 2007, <<http://www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch/nccr/publications/workingpaper/pdf/WP6.pdf>>.
- 3 Valerie J. Bunce, Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience, in: World Politics, No. 2/2003, pp. 167–192.

cannot be achieved without solving the problem of the future status of Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

After the demise of the communist system, two distinct approaches to promoting and supporting democracy in the former Soviet Union—and especially in the Caucasus—were competing with each other. The first approach has been political and the second developmental. The former approach proceeds from a relatively narrow conception of democracy—focused, above all, on elections and political liberties. It directs aid at core political processes and institutions—especially elections, political parties and politically oriented civil society groups. The second approach champions incremental and sustainable change in various sectors of politics and economy. It often gives priority to governance and the “building of a well-functioning state.”<sup>4</sup> The history of democratic development shows that the political approach championed by “the West” not only failed in the Caucasus, but also in Central Asia. Perceiving democracy primarily in its procedural aspects as the possibility to have free and fair elections, the proponents of this approach overlooked underlying socio-economic problems as well as security threats. Kyrgyzstan serves as a good example in this respect. Following the path of democracy after having overthrown Akayev’s government in 2005, the country could not overcome its socio-economic and security problems. Fear of destabilization led to further consolidation of power in the hands of incumbent President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. Thus, Kyrgyzstan, after a referendum and parliament elections, slowly moved towards becoming an autocratic regime. Similar developments can be observed in the countries of the South Caucasus, where governments and ruling elites are hesitant to engage in further democratization efforts fearing the potential eruption of the conflicts in Karabakh, Ossetia and Abkhazia. These conflicts appear to be hanging like the Sword of Damocles over the societies in these countries. Yet, they also undermine the countries’ path towards Euro-Atlantic integration. The ‘no peace, no war’ condition between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and Georgia and Russia has had an immensely negative impact on the democratization of the three Caucasian countries. The conflicts put economic and political pressure on these countries, impoverish societies and create conditions for the emergence of organized crime on a larger scale. The conflicts also prevent the countries to consolidate as a nation-state and thereby contribute to further instability and insecurity in the region.<sup>5</sup>

4 Thomas Carothers, Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental, in: *Journal of Democracy*, No. 1/2009, pp. 5–19.

5 Vladimir Socor, The Frozen Conflicts: A Challenge to Euro-Atlantic Interests. Report prepared by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, on the Occasion of the NATO Summit 2004, for “A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region,” Jamestown Foundation, Washington, DC, 2004, <[http://www.jamestown.org/fileadmin/Vlads\\_Corner/policypapers/KonstRon.doc](http://www.jamestown.org/fileadmin/Vlads_Corner/policypapers/KonstRon.doc)>.

The reason why the political approach adopted by the European Union and the US has largely failed to democratize these countries lies in the hesitation of the Caucasian governments to implement liberal reforms fearing that such reforms could weaken their political stance and stability. Indeed, democratization without conflict resolution would shake societies in a way that could be instrumentalized by internal and external forces. Enjoying democratic rights such as the freedom of assembly, no censorship as well as absence of control of certain aspects of political life could help these forces to easily manipulate public opinion. At the same time, external forces could finance the political parties or organizations to pursue agendas going against the interests of the country. All these factors paired with weak political institutions, a feeble political culture and economic instability could worsen the situation in the countries. The presence of the conflict and its pressure on both, societies and governments, force the latter to spend more resources on militarization and an arms race rather than on institution-building, reforms in the education sector and spending on social issues, infrastructure and renovation.

Applying democratization theories to the cases of South Caucasian countries, one can observe that countries in transition to democracies are more likely to be involved in wars than autocratic or fully democratic countries.<sup>6</sup> In all three countries of the Caucasus nationalism has become a very strong force. More democratization could even foster a more belligerent form of nationalism. To use Samuel Huntington's terminology, the South Caucasian countries suffer from a gap between high levels of political participation and weak political institutions. The weaker the institutions, the greater the likelihood that a war-prone form of nationalism will emerge in these democratizing countries. Newly democratizing countries often experience a weakening of central state institutions because their old institutions have eroded and their new ones are only partially developed. In presence of the frozen conflicts on their territories, this institutional weakness results in conditions that are either unable to contain or even encourage hostilities. In the face of this institutional deficit, political leaders rely on expedient strategies to cope with the political impasse of democratization. Such strategies that include satisfaction of nationalist groups as well as war rhetoric of various factions can lead the governments to conduct reckless foreign policies and launch a war.

The existence of frozen conflicts in the countries of the South Caucasus and particularly the inability of the Western democracies to solve them has had a negative impact on public perception of democratic ideas in the region. The weak and unprofessional response of the U.S. and EU in the case of the five-day war

6 Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War, in: International Organization, No. 2/2007, pp. 297–337, <<http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/%7Ejohnston/mansfield.pdf>>, and Mansfield/Snyder, Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War, Cambridge, MA, 2005.

between Georgia and Russia in the summer of 2008 had negative consequences in terms of the image of the West and democracy in Azerbaijan. The public has been accusing the West of applying double standards. That was particularly true in the public perception of the Karabakh war and Western support of Armenia. The Georgian conflict hardened this perception since the West was not able to protect the country's young and emerging democracy. In the light of these experiences, the average Azerbaijani could be inclined to question if the West was ever to come to the help of the Muslim population in a democratic Azerbaijan given its failure to do so with respect to a democratic and Christian Georgia in the summer of last year. After the developments in August 2008, it became extremely hard for the Azerbaijani public to continue to believe in Euro-Atlantic integration, and European democratic institutions.

In analyzing democratic development in South Caucasus we should therefore not neglect the role of Russia. Sliding towards autocratic systems and remaining the hostage of fear, all three countries follow the scenario drafted by Moscow. The Russian policy paradigm with respect to the frozen conflicts can be defined as controlled instability. Russia aggravates the conflicts and then tries to mediate between the opposing sides. It is not in the Russian interests to help the countries to solve the conflicts since it could undermine the Russian military presence in the region. When necessary, Russia fosters the state weakness and instability in the conflicting countries, distracting them from the "agenda of systemic reforms".<sup>7</sup>

All three countries continue to remain in the zone of political turbulence. The latest events in the region including the 2008 August war have turned upside-down Western perceptions of local ethno-political conflicts and the associated prospects for their solution. After the war, the United States and the European Union adopted a more balanced stance towards the situation in the region by redefining their Russia-first approach. This inspires hope for an equitable, long-lasting solution based on the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the involved states.<sup>8</sup>

The European Union and the United States need to understand the specific character of the South Caucasus and assist the countries in coping with their internal problems. Resolution of the frozen inter-ethnic conflicts would eventually have an impact on democratic development in these countries. In case of a successful resolution of the frozen conflicts, the countries of the South Caucasus might be able

<sup>7</sup> Socor, *op.cit.* (note 5), p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ceslav Ciobanu, *Moldova and the "Frozen and Forgotten" Conflicts in Post-Soviet States* (U.S. Institute of Peace), Washington, DC, 2004.



to develop democracy even without external help. Failed resolution of frozen conflicts in South Caucasus will consequently lead to the failure of democratization in all countries of the region. It will create favorable conditions for countries to slip into a period of strong autocratic regimes fostering their power by maintaining an arms race and embracing a harsh rhetoric. Such a Cold War in the region could eventually spark a new and even more devastating war than the August 2008 crisis.



## Foreign Perceptions of Georgian Democracy: Post-Soviet Regional Security Context

*George Khelashvili*

What is the impact of foreign involvement on democratization? The present case deals with the perception of Georgian democracy abroad that has influenced not only the democratization process in Georgia, but also wider patterns of regional security in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The rhetoric of democratization in the Georgian case was used not as a means of furthering better governance, but as an ideological means that served domestic political ends and reflected ideological convictions that were detached from power political considerations. Curtailed democratization, nevertheless, benefited Georgia and international efforts to further more democratic governance in the region must be continued.

Disagreement about Georgian democracy

Georgia was a showcase of democratic transformation in-between the Rose Revolution of November 2003 and the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008. The perception of Georgian democracy abroad was extremely diverse, ranging from George W. Bush's famous praise for Georgia as a "beacon of liberty" to the Kremlin's perception of Georgian leadership as a dangerous quasi-fascist regime. How could perceptions of the same government be so diverse? The answer seems to lie in the ideologization of the concept of democratization in the last few years, where President Mikhail Saakashvili's regime has become a geopolitical symbol rather than a genuine example of a progressive regime following a successful democratic transformation. Furthermore, this ideologization harmed both Georgia as well as great powers involved in regional politics.

Causes of this divergence in perceptions by foreign powers, first of all, the US and Russia, were related more to their domestic politics, values and vision of the development of regional countries' political systems rather than the two great powers' geopolitical ambitions, as it may appear at a first glance. A common, and largely simplified, picture of two superpowers wrangling about their political influence in the region and being preoccupied with expanding their power base is rather alluring, except for it does not stand up to a closer scrutiny. The US, European, and Russian involvement in Georgian politics have to be considered in this context.

The representation of the revolutionary Georgian government in two drastically opposing images by the United States and Russia was due to their respective



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domestic political concerns and understanding of how regional societies' political systems should be arranged. The US saw regional politics in the post-Soviet space in the light of an expansion of freedom and democracy. By Moscow, this was perceived as a coordinated attempt by the US and the rest of the West to undermine the Russian regime through a sequence of democratic revolutions at its borders.

Despite the domestic political origins of the causes of these exaggerated perceptions of the transformations in Georgia, the effects of these diverging representations of reality had important repercussions for all other post-Soviet states. These states viewed the "Color Revolutions" in Georgia and Ukraine with certain ambivalence.

#### Regional significance

Success or failure of an apparent Georgian attempt at rapid democratization was by no means limited to Georgia itself. Coupled with the Orange Revolution in Ukraine a year later, Georgia's peaceful regime change, with subsequent divergent reactions from the two most important great powers—the US and Russia—was an important milestone in post-Soviet politics.

On the one hand, it was meant to inspire the rest of the southern tier of the former Soviet Union—the societies of the Caucasus and Central Asia, and Russia itself—that suffered from rigid authoritarian governments. Understandably, the *anciens régimes* all over the post-Soviet space were in jitters after the menacing transformations in their former brotherly republics. Nevertheless, their responses were not overtly hostile to the new regimes. This can be explained not only by diplomatic etiquette and political considerations. These authoritarian regimes were not only pressured from within, but also from without: relationships with Russia for many of them (most notably for Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Moldova, and even Belarus) were far from cloudless and harmonious. Some of them actually welcomed increased US influence in the region to balance Russian predominance.

Therefore, the hopes attached to Georgian (and Ukrainian) regime change were not exclusively born by human rights and democracy activists but also by regional elites who looked to alleviate foreign pressures increasingly coming from Russia's newly assertive leadership.

Hence, the divergent reactions from the US and Russia to the policies of the new Georgian leadership brought some excitement among the former Soviet republics. What mattered was the ideologically influenced rhetorical representation of

Saakashvili's case, rather than the actual direction of transformations and of the state of affairs within Georgia. In the next few years, especially against the background of heightened expectations, the failure of Georgia to achieve notable economic success, dramatic social transformation, democratic governance and liberation from the dominance of Russia (especially in Georgia's conflict-ridden areas—Abkhazia and South Ossetia) did not bring about the desired outcomes for either democratic movements or some of the independence-minded elites in the former Soviet space.

#### Regional security implications

Apart from damaging the prospects of post-Soviet democratization, the Russian-Georgian war over South Ossetia had a few significant implications for regional security. It brought some important lessons to external observers and policy makers. However, these lessons do not point in one direction only.

First, it became clear that backtracking on democracy could lead to decreased national and, consequently, regional security. A hypothesis that countries in democratic transition may be more unstable than either consolidated democracies or dictatorships was once again vindicated.



Insights from Georgia and Russia on regional security in the Caucasus

Secondly, the authoritarian elites of the states in the region became increasingly aware that their regimes' vulnerabilities did not exclusively originate from where they thought they were coming from: either from democratic activism encouraged by the West or religious fundamentalism. The threat of regime change now could also come from the dominant regional great power—Russia. The previously predominant assumption—that regime change was pushed or facilitated by the West or radical religious movements—was jeopardized by Russia's overt attempt to push for regime change in Georgia during the August 2008 invasion.

Thirdly, basic democratic institutions that had been developed in Georgia in the last one and a half decades contributed to the stability of the country's political and economic system in the wake of the disastrous August War, thus allowing it not to descend into chaos in the wake of a military defeat.

Conclusion: democratization and regional security

These lessons invite the conclusion that the ideologization of the democratization process and its subsequent entangling with geopolitics may bring negative results for the country in transition as well as outside great powers that have stakes in the process, trying to either support or resist democratization. The major reason of these undesired developments has been loading the concept of democracy with two additional meanings besides its original promise of good governance by the people for the people. The first of these meanings is power—that democracy itself was a contagious concept with spill-over effects for the region. This additional meaning implied that, first, democracy could be imported and, second, this import could have been done by the power of example alone. Both of these assumptions proved wrong in the case of Georgia (and also Ukraine) and the whole post-Soviet space.

The second meaning with which democracy was loaded has been historicism. Democratization was interpreted as an inevitable, teleological process for the post-Soviet region, which was due to happen as soon as the ferment of democracy was brought in from outside.

What is remarkable about these assumptions is that they were professed, explicitly and implicitly, not only by supporters of the democratization process, i.e. the US, but also by its outspoken opponents, i.e. the Russian government. The implicit belief that the spread of "color revolutions" was inevitable supported much of the policy thinking of Vladimir Putin's government in the last few years. The great powers, the US and Russia, that were involved in the process of Georgia's

transformation, be it in an encouraging or discouraging manner, both came out weakened from the ordeal of the August War. While US credibility in the post-Soviet space suffered a setback, Russia's international reputation was tarnished even further, contributing to an acute economic crisis that followed the August War.

Moreover, it became evident that unconsolidated democracies may pose as much a regional security risk as authoritarian regimes. However, this conclusion, if true, may not engender unequivocal policy prescriptions. Should the democratization attempts continue in the face of flagging performance of the "second wave" of post-Soviet revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan? Would the results of potential conflicts stemming from immediate effects of democratic regime change outweigh the benefits of long-term democratization? What may be the regional security risks associated with the coexistence of states with divergent domestic political structures—most likely, unconsolidated democracies and consolidated autocracies?

A tentative answer to these questions may be that pushing for genuine democratization in the region is the only way forward for two major reasons. First, indefinitely maintaining the *status quo* in these authoritarian states may inevitably produce yet another, maybe even larger regional conflagration. Second, as we have seen in Georgian politics in the last two years, backtracking on democracy may bring as much domestic instability as pushing forward with democratization, as in the case of Ukrainian politics. The inconvenient truth is that the genie of liberal democracy is out of the bottle in the post-Soviet space and bringing it back seems to be almost impossible. The best way to go forward is to manage the security repercussions of the spread of democracy where it takes root.





## Rethinking Democracy and Security in the Caucasus

*Sergey Filippov*

Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the topic of democratization remains of paramount importance for the countries of the South Caucasus region. In its turn, democratization is strongly interlinked with the issue of security. Taken as a whole, developments in these countries in the post-Soviet period have been marked by ethnic conflicts and violence, economic distress, unsuccessful attempts of democratization, and rising authoritarianism. Back in 1997, S. Neil MacFarlane provided a comprehensive analysis of interconnections between democratization and security in the region.<sup>1</sup> One of his major observations is that “rather than playing a proactive role, democratization served primarily as a permissive condition opening the way for conflict potential to evolve into war.”<sup>2</sup> A decade later, in August 2008, this conflict potential indeed evolved into a war between Georgia and Russia over the breakaway region of South Ossetia.



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### South Caucasus at the Focus of Global Geopolitics

Developments in republics of the South Caucasus in terms of democratization and securitization cannot be understood without the role and involvement of external actors. Dutch scholar Mehdi Parvizi Amineh<sup>3</sup> argues that the world is witnessing a re-composition of the geopolitical map, whereby Central Eurasia in general and the South Caucasus in particular is becoming an arena of colliding interests of various states. With the rising global energy demand, the Caspian region is becoming one of the most important geo-political areas of the 21st century.<sup>4</sup> The contradictory interests of regional powers, Western powers, and transnational corporations around the South Caucasus and the region's energy resources, shape the dynamics and trajectories of democratization and securitization in the region.

The United States is determined to secure itself a dominant position in the region, benefiting from its strategic geopolitical location (next to Russia and Iran), and for the reasons of control and security of the oil and gas resources in the Caspian Sea. It can be regarded as part of the global US agenda to ensure eco-

1 S. Neil MacFarlane, Democratization, Nationalism and Regional Security in the Southern Caucasus, in: *Government and Opposition: An International Journal of Comparative Politics* 2/1997, pp. 399–420.

2 Ibid, p. 401.

3 Mehdi Parvizi Amineh, *Globalisation, Geopolitics and Energy Security in Central Eurasia and the Caspian Region* (Clingendael International Energy Program), The Hague 2003.

4 Amineh, *Towards the control of oil resources in the Caspian Region*, London 2000.

nomic and geo-political dominance in Eurasia.<sup>5</sup> In his seminal book Zbigniew Brzezinski brilliantly describes this strategy, “For America, the chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia ... America’s global primacy is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained.”<sup>6</sup> More specifically, one of the primary interests of the US in the South Caucasus is to secure the safe passage of oil through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

This increasing role of the United States in the region of Russia’s traditional dominance (or its “backyard”) is received with caution and suspicion by Moscow. From the Russian perspective, US actions in the South Caucasus constitute another step of its strategic encirclement<sup>7</sup>, boosted by earlier plans for the installation of a US anti-missile shield in Eastern Europe. In the Caucasus, Russia has been engaged in enhanced military cooperation with Armenia, viewed as a Russian ally. The prospects of the emergence of US military bases at its borders in Georgia, led, inter alia, to Russia’s hawkish rhetoric and joint military exercises with Latin American countries.

Another essential player in the region is the European Union. Recent EU enlargements have extended its external borders to the Black Sea, and hence the Caucasus. The EU seeks to promote peace and stability at its external borders and is committed to support democratization and enhance security in the region. Moreover, the EU regards the energy issue to be of paramount importance. As a result of the Russia-Ukraine gas disputes in January 2006 and 2009, the reputation of Russia as a supplier and Ukraine as a transit country were seriously tarnished. Hence, the EU regards the South Caucasus as an alternative energy supply route. The Union is actively involved in the Nabucco, South Caucasus and Trans-Caspian gas pipeline projects.

Last but not least, Turkey is a vital player in the region. The disintegration of the Soviet Union created an opportunity for Turkey to increase its influence in the region. As Turkey shares a common culture and history with Azerbaijan, it has been a staunch supporter of its efforts to preserve territorial integrity and to realize the economic potential arising from rich natural resources. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline is a prime example of cooperation in the energy sphere. On the other hand, the relationships with Armenia are strained by the question of the Armenian genocide of 1915–1923.

5 Dan Jakopovich, The 2003 “Rose Revolution” in Georgia: A Case Study of High Politics and Rank-and-File Execution, in: *Debate: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 2/2007, pp. 211–220.

6 Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York, NY, 1997, p. 30.

7 Editorial, Russia and the West: The end of the honeymoon, in: *Strategic Survey* 1/2004, pp. 116–129.

## Frozen Conflicts as a Threat to Security

As MacFarlane rightly argues, “the political opening of the late Soviet and post-Soviet eras was an important source of insecurity in the region in the early 1990s.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, nationalistic rhetoric came to substitute the Soviet one in the period right before and soon after the demise of the Soviet Union. In these circumstances, the inter-ethnic tensions which were controlled by the Soviet regime sparked with renewed force.

“Frozen conflicts” represent a very particular feature of the South Caucasus. The essence of the problem lies in the internal borders within the Soviet Union that were arbitrarily and artificially drawn by Soviet leaders<sup>9</sup>. Under Soviet rule, the administrative-territorial division in the Soviet Union was not high on the political agenda, and only the external borders were of concern for the Soviet leadership.

Administrative borders in the Soviet South Caucasus only partially corresponded to the ethnic composition of the territories. Robert Service in his biography of Joseph Stalin<sup>10</sup> explains, why Nagorno-Karabakh, largely populated by ethnic Armenians, became part of the Azerbaijani SSR, and not of the Armenian SSR. According to him, the Soviet Union had far-reaching plans concerning Turkey, wishing it would develop as a communist state. Needing to appease Turkey, Stalin agreed to an administrative division under which Armenian-populated Nagorno-Karabakh would be under the control of Azerbaijan. In the case of Abkhazia, in 1921 the Bolsheviks made it a Socialist Soviet Republic with the ambiguous status of a treaty republic associated with the Georgian SSR. Later, in 1931, Stalin made it an autonomous republic within the Georgian SSR.

As the Soviet Union began to disintegrate at the end of the 1980s, ethnic tensions grew between the Abkhaz and South Ossetians on one side and Georgians on the other. These minorities feared that Georgia’s independence would lead to the abolishment of their autonomy, and they insistently expressed their determination to leave the Georgian SSR, but to stay in the Soviet Union as separate SSRs. These tensions led to violent clashes and victims on both sides. Mostly for similar reasons a military conflict erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh.

8 MacFarlane, *op.cit.* (note 1), p. 400.

9 For example, in 1954, the Soviet leader of Ukrainian origin Nikita Khrushchev initiated a transfer of the Crimea region from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. Needless to say, no referendum was held and the population was not consulted. Till now, the Crimea peninsula remains a thorny issue in the bilateral Russian-Ukrainian relations.

10 Robert Service, *Stalin: A Biography*. Cambridge, MA, 2004.

The rush of the Soviet Republics' elites for independence from the Soviet Union (including the Russian SFSR itself) and the subsequent hasty dismemberment of the Soviet Union made peaceful negotiations on the state borders of newly emerged countries impossible and led to violent conflicts in the disputed regions. Most hostilities were effectively stopped with active Russian involvement and mediation. Moscow seeks to ensure stability at its borders, and is engaged in peace negotiations. The Kremlin offered a peace solution for Transnistria in 2003; it has been actively involved in the OSCE Minsk Group negotiating a political settlement of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh; and it deployed its peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On the other side, it has been widely suggested that Moscow's involvement in the settlement of the frozen conflicts was rather destabilizing. For instance, Anar Valiyev develops the argument that Russia is a party of and arbiter to the conflicts, and sees the goals of its policies as 'controlled instability' whereby Moscow fosters state weakness in the target countries and prevents them from democratization and development of organic ties with the West.<sup>11</sup>

Moscow had always abstained from recognition of independence of the de-facto independent breakaway regions. However, the Kosovo precedent and the decision of Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili to launch a military offensive on civilians in Tskhinvali provided the Kremlin with both legal and legitimate justification of the recognition of independence of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Unsurprisingly, this move was met by condemnation from Western countries, NATO, OSCE and the European Council.

To sum up, democratization, security and stability in the Caucasus cannot be achieved without a just, democratic, peaceful and lasting settlement of the "frozen conflicts."

#### Democratization

It is increasingly understood that the unresolved status of the frozen conflicts represent an impediment to democratization. Frozen conflicts, coupled with the perceived Russian threat, are used as a justification for the curtailment of civil liberties and freedoms by the authoritarian regimes of the South Caucasus.

By and large, the record of democratization in the South Caucasus has been quite poor. While the authoritarian rulers are paying lip service to democracy, their actual steps on the democratization path have been quite modest. Human

<sup>11</sup> Anar Valiyev, *Frozen Conflicts and Their Impact on Democratisation in South Caucasus* (Paper presented at DGAP 12th New Faces Conference, Prague, 16–18 March 2009); summary here pp. 67–72.

Rights Watch recorded numerous evidence of brutal suppression of the opposition, torture, existence of political prisoners, violations of freedom of assembly, crackdown on free media and other limitations of civil liberties and human rights in all three republics<sup>12</sup>. The most recent example is the change of Azerbaijan's Constitution with the referendum on the 18th of March 2009, whereby the limits of presidential terms were effectively scrapped, allowing President Ilham Aliyev (who inherited the presidency from his father) to stay in office for life. The West remained silent on yet another authoritarian move, whereas the same type of referendum in Belarus in 2004 was widely denounced by Western democracies and international media.

Georgia has been portrayed as an example of successful transformation towards a democratic state. However, the picture of the Rose Revolution is not that rosy. It is widely argued that the "Rose Revolution" was a product of US involvement in the region, rather than genuine democratization. Dan Jakopovich<sup>13</sup> claims that the principal elements of the opposition against Eduard Shevardnadze were trained and financed by the US government and mainstream US NGOs. More specifically, the youth movement Kmara ("Enough") which was instrumental in bringing down the Shevardnadze regime, was funded, among others, by Freedom House, USAID, National Endowment for Democracy, George Soros' Open Society Institute and others.<sup>14</sup> President Saakashvili implemented successful democratic and free market reforms at the beginning of his presidential term, yet moved towards authoritarian rule rapidly afterwards.

While the US has sought to promote its interests in the South Caucasus through the support of local NGOs, the European Union has been promoting democratization by the means of clear and transparent programs. Maria Freire and Licia Simão<sup>15</sup> provide a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of EU policies towards the region. The EU has been projecting its soft power based on a stabilization approach; Partnership and Cooperation Agreements were signed, and progressively the countries were included in the European Neighborhood Policy.

12 Armenia: <<http://www.hrw.org/en/europecentral-asia/Armenia>>; Azerbaijan: <<http://www.hrw.org/en/europecentral-asia/Azerbaijan>>; Georgia: <<http://www.hrw.org/en/europecentral-asia/georgia>>.

13 Dan Jakopovich, The 2003 "Rose Revolution" in Georgia: A Case Study of High Politics and Rank-and-File Execution, in: *Debate: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 2/2007, pp. 211–220.

14 Graeme P. Herd, Colourful Revolutions in the CIS: "Manufactured" versus "Managed" Democracy?, in: *Problems of Post-Communism* 2/2005, pp. 3–18.

15 Maria Freire and Licia Simão, Democratization and Security in Central and Eastern Europe (Paper presented at DGAP 12th New Faces Conference. Prague, 16–18 March 2009); summary here pp. 63–66.

### Prospects

The highly complex and volatile situation in the South Caucasus is shaped by diverging interests of global and regional powers, states and breakaway regions, elites and societies. Russia, being an influential player in the region, remains adamant on the issue of potential NATO membership of these republics and perceives the US role in the region as a threat to its national security. Perceptions of the Russian leadership were vividly described by Cohen in 2006: “Russia today is determined to prevent Georgia and the Ukraine from joining NATO. The Russian military feels that it is losing face by being pushed out of its former Soviet dependencies—first from its Georgian military bases, then from Ossetia and Abkhazia, and eventually from the dachas and sanatoria along the Black Sea coast.”<sup>16</sup> However, Moscow has not shown visible opposition to the European future of the South Caucasian republics, clearly separating potential NATO and EU memberships. Nicolas Sarkozy’s mediation on behalf of the EU was instrumental in ending hostilities in August 2008. It is expected that the EU will continue to play its role of a peace broker in the South Caucasus and serve as a model of democratization.

Overall, it emerges that the solution to the complex problems faced by the South Caucasus should be based on several principles, including guarantees of security to the populations of the South Caucasus, renewed efforts at genuine democratization, respect for minority rights and respect for territorial integrity in line with international law and UN resolutions, and possibly a neutral status of the region.

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16 Ariel Cohen, Preventing a Russian-Georgian Military Confrontation (The Heritage Foundation), <<http://www.heritage.org/research/russiaandeurasia/wm1024.cfm>>, Washington, DC, 2006.



## Beyond the Democratic Theory: Exploring Authoritarian Liberalisms in Central Asia

*Assel Rustemova*

There is a seeming paradox with regard to democratization processes in Central Asia. Political regimes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have become politically more authoritarian and economically more liberal. This process is prominent not only in Central Asia, but exists with some reservations in the Caucasus and most notably China. Contrary to the arguments that foresaw a rapid democratization in these countries at the beginning of the 1990s, the underlying theory collapses in the light of multiple definitions of political and economic liberalisms. By treating liberalism as a practice one could argue against generalized terms and trace discontinuities and a multiplicity of models to the different relationship of a state towards its population. Such a framework is based on Michel Foucault's concept of *governmentality*, which allows for the examination of how governments decide to position themselves in and *vis-à-vis* society. Some relate to their population in a paternalistic manner, while others see themselves solely as administrators and managers. This positioning produces a different set of economic and political practices, or, in the language of Foucault *régimes*.

Against this background, the priority of economic growth and development over other political ends allows the governing elite in Kazakhstan to de-politicize genuine political problems and frame them as technical and a matter of skill. As a result, democratization is perceived as a challenge that threatens economic stability and brings nothing but poverty to countries that follow it. In Uzbekistan, a different version of governmentality can be observed where political and economic liberalism are stripped from their original meanings and inverted to support a strong, controlling and paternalistic state. This positioning does not tolerate any threat to the "collective" efforts of building a better future for all and operates within the ideological scheme that has been copied from the Soviet Union. Local state controlled media presents democracy as redistributive justice, which promotes the existence of strong states with large bureaucratic apparatuses; it also fosters paternalism and the dependency on state salaries by a large proportion of the population. In conclusion, a more nuanced approach that examines the mode of governmentality in each country illuminates the variety of authoritarian liberalisms.



Assel Rustemova

### The State of Democratic Theory and Governmentality

As a starting point, this analysis builds on the assumption that we currently experience a tremendous transformation of our world away from modern structures towards post-modern politics and mechanisms of governance. Much has been written about how postmodernism alters democracy, which is conceptually still based on the old-fashioned structures of modernity. There are two strategies by which contemporary scholars of democratic theory try to capture radical political and economic changes. Both strategies, however, are flawed because they make use of old concepts and definitions. The first group of scholars prefers to develop “thought experiments” and invent new definitions of democracy. As a result of such an enterprise we are faced with terms like Chantal Mouffe’s agonistic, Charles Taylor’s communitarian, Habermas’ deliberative, and Hirst’s associative democracies. None of them are, however, implementable in practice, because they depend on a social setting that would require a significant shift in the political build-up of contemporary (democratic) societies. On the other hand, we also find sociological accounts of postmodern politics, in which scholars claim the absence of democracy in today’s political scene which, according to them, is a “postmodern, neoliberal, techno-oligarchic governmentality” (Gabardi) or a system of “practical anti-humanism” (Althusser).

Yet, none of these explanations could address a paradox that we observe in Central Asia, where both Central Asian states, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, are becoming highly authoritarian, but economically more liberal. As a result, contemporary democratic theory needs to theorize the economy and secondly, account for the definitive role of government in the democratization process rather than accepting a bottom-up approach which focuses largely on civil society and neglects to take into account the existing governmental structures. The purpose of the analysis that is put forward here is thus the provision of a framework that retains the critical edge in both economics and politics while showing how two distinct realms are related and interlinked with each other. As a result, I re-conceptualize Authoritarian Liberalism as highly centralized authoritarian political systems that aim to implement economic market principles as a way to show various strategies of how states cope with the challenges of the post-modern world. I treat governing not as a simply political endeavor, but as an art of balancing competing logics of democracy which seek to promote the values of equity and economics that promotes the values of efficiency. These contradictory logics invert the nature of the political into a “play between the totalization of modern bureaucratic institutions and the individualization of people through capital-

ist commerce and personal consciousness.”<sup>1</sup> The rationale of governance can either rely on modern juridical coercive institutions of states or take a different approach in relying on incentives and competition while fostering circulation of goods, services, ideas, etc., and an economy of exchange. Therefore, Foucault’s description of two styles of governmentality seems to be fruitful for the analysis of Central Asia in order to assess how the positioning of a state in society shapes economic and political processes. It is not to say that the two styles of governmentality that I assess here are the ideal-types and do not overlap. On the contrary, both are highly intertwined and exist simultaneously, however, we can discern proclivities of governments in particular “issue areas” towards the chosen style.

#### Case Studies of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

For instance, if Uzbekistan sees itself as a paternalistic redistributive state it will a) set out a vision for development that everyone has to comply with; b) it will not allow its citizens to risk their well-being in the open market. Instead, it will provide for its people and boast indicators of social spending. We notice a sway into totalization of bureaucratic institutions that control population. The ideal of a state as an embodiment of justice and fairness that redistributes resources to

1 Philip Cerny, *The Governmentalization of World Politics*, in: Eleonore Kofman, Gillian Youngs (ed.), *Globalization: Theory and Practice*, New York, NY, 2008.



Assel Rustemova from Kazakhstan shares her understanding of Foucault during the Central Asia session

the needs of every individual through centralized control over national economy contradicts the ideals of liberal democracy in the following ways: first, it assumes a malleable, obedient citizen under the strong enforcement of rules and laws. It treats individual resistance as a threat to all and most importantly a threat to the well-being of the whole nation.<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances, the Uzbek government launched a negative campaign against liberal democratic practices. Specifically, the Uzbek government identifies two major flaws in the 'unjust' version of democracy: lack of physical security and social protection. President Islam Karimov argued for the non-applicability of Western political systems based on the separation of powers and defended the need for the superiority of the executive branch as a premise for "fulfillment of laws, protection of freedoms and implementation of political and economic reforms."<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, he claims that true democracy is only possible if it "protects interests for all layers of the population."<sup>4</sup> In 1992, Karimov wrote "Our goal is... to create such a structure which would allow securing economic and political independence [for] Uzbekistan."<sup>5</sup> As a result, the primary role of the state is its welfare function towards society, which acts as a recipient of protection from the paternalistic state. In Uzbekistan, the logic of governance despises democracy as an unfair and unjust political system, because of its individualistic nature that forces everyone to accept a disorderly fashion and risk *vis-à-vis* one's livelihood and well-being. Instead, by supporting a strong state that provides for the people who work for the benefit of a common good and social justice, authoritarian Uzbekistan legitimizes policies as being morally superior to Western values and policies.

On the other hand, Kazakhstan's government sees itself as a manager in society that operates on its own within market conditions that are maintained by the state. According to this logic, economic growth becomes the key goal of the whole society and hence the state purposefully does not interfere directly into the economy, but regulates it indirectly via incentives and competition. In managerial style, citizens cannot be dependent on the state. Instead, managerial governmentality envisions a break with "the old system" by fostering a liberal

2 Uzbek Leader: Corrupt Officials "My enemies," in: BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 11-9-2001, available via <<http://www.lexisnexis.com>> (accessed 2-12-2008). Among the most recent ones is: Uzbek Leader Rebukes Central Region's Top Officials for Low Efficiency, in: BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 17-4-2008, available via <<http://www.lexisnexis.com>> (accessed on 2-12-2008).

3 Press Service of Uzbekistan's Government: Annotation to the First Collection of Works by I. A. Karimov Uzbekistan: National Independence, Economy, Policy, Ideology, <[http://2004.press-service.uz/eng/knigi\\_knigi\\_eng/knigi\\_eng3.htm](http://2004.press-service.uz/eng/knigi_knigi_eng/knigi_eng3.htm)> (accessed on 10-5-2008).

4 Ibid.

5 Karimov, Islam, O'zbekiston – o'z istiqbol va taraqqiyot yoli. Collection of works Uzbekiston – buyuk kelajak sari, Tashkent 1998, p. 53.

market economy based on principles of efficiency and utility: “the new role of the government now consists not in making decisions for the people, but first and foremost in creating the conditions under which free citizens and the private sector can undertake effective measures for themselves and their families.”<sup>6</sup> The government envisions the state’s role as providing the conditions for a decent standard of living, such as being able to provide for one’s family, own a home, get a good education and health care, and accumulate funds for retirement. And even though these priorities are set out by the president, individual citizens to a large degree are responsible for their own success or failure. The assumed sway to individualization without strong law enforcement is premised on a fragile equilibrium of the successful delivery of the model.

Democracy in such a state is associated with fracture and instability that might negatively impact the fragile market system. The strategy of the government is not to deny freedoms of individuals as such, but to turn truly political issues into technical “problems.” The managerial style of governmentality precludes the establishment of a liberal democratic regime for several reasons. First of all, it allows for the existence of diversity only insofar as it supports economic exchange and growth without addressing the issues of redistribution, recognition or representation. Secondly, liberal democracy will always challenge the people in power by calling free and fair elections, which, according to the government, threaten the success of the whole economic project in place. We hear that it is bad to “change the helmsman in the middle of the journey.” Specifically, the Kazakh government has claimed that instability will increase risks and deter foreign investors from coming to invest in Kazakh markets. Low FDI will slow development of oil resources and the diversification of the national economy. If that were to happen, unemployment and inflation would turn the suggested plan towards more prosperity into a vicious circle of a persistent economic downturn. The national and state-controlled mass media therefore loves to publish examples from countries of ‘colored revolutions’ where results have been, least to say, dubious.

To sum up, Uzbekistan sees itself as a paternalistic redistributive state. Democracy for such a state is void of the liberal meaning and dressed into the rhetoric of redistributive justice. This type of authoritarian liberalism emphasizes bureaucratic totalization and a paternalistic style of governmentality. On the other hand, Kazakhstan’s government sees itself as a manager in society that operates on its own within market conditions (of competitiveness) that are maintained by the state. Democracy in such a state is seen as a challenge to the existing market

6 Nursultan Nazarbayev, *Kazakhstan 2030: Prosperity, Security and ever growing welfare of all the Kazakhtanis* Almaty (Kazakhstan), 2007, <<http://portal.mfa.kz/portal/page/portal/mfa/en/content/reference/strategy2030>>.

structure—a structure that brings economic material benefit to all people. Authoritarian liberalism in Kazakhstan facilitates individualization and a managerial style of governmentality. Within these conditions, both regimes defend political authoritarianism by criticizing two problems that the procedural liberal democracy is unable to solve. One is the problem of political and economic stability and the second is the problem of social and economic inequality.



## Controlling the Uncontrollable—Public Communication and the Effectiveness of Democracy Promotion

*Alexander Wolters*

Programs of democracy promotion run in Central Asia have all too often resulted in failure to initiate lasting progressive change. In Kyrgyzstan, like in most of Central Asia, projects for promoting democracy rarely show lasting effects. At best they only waste resources and occasionally provide work for some as long as the project continues, at worst they contribute to the reproduction of informal institutions and exacerbate existing local cleavages. To enhance the effectiveness of democracy promotion and development cooperation in general specific control mechanisms are set into force. Two central different “modes of control” are of special importance here.

The first, politico-administrative mode of control refers to measures that are related to the obligation of any development organization to directly or indirectly answer to a political superior. Usually such superior is a parliament which is responsible to guarantee oversight over the activities of organizations that implement development aid. In most cases, the corresponding organization would be a ministry, in the case of Germany the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The ministry distributes money from the federal budget to executing agencies, with the biggest shares going to the German development bank, the *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)*, and the *Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)* in the case of Germany. From here aid is channeled to contractors and subcontractors before it finally reaches the recipient, either in form of loans and grants or in form of material or knowledge support. The transfer of aid from one place to another is characterized by an incomprehensible web of donors, contractors, partner organizations and complicated cooperations between all actors involved.

Since superior organizations are usually limited in their resources for controlling the subordinates, the problem of information aggregation arises. Parliamentarians in the German *Bundestag*, for example, have neither time nor sufficient material resources to guarantee full control over the ministry's activities. The same holds true for the relationship between the ministry and the KfW and GTZ. At every juncture between controller and controlled the problem of information aggregation is repeated. How do organizations try to solve this problem? According to



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Thomas Carothers,<sup>1</sup> USAID headquarters personnel strongly believes in quantitative data aggregation, i.e. the representation of realities in numbers. Numerical representation secures the easiest way to process information. In accordance with that belief much time is spent on the development of indicators that allow for an encompassing reproduction of the realities on the ground in numbers. However, although more and more sets of indicators are being invented, the effects of control remain limited. The question arises how projects that aim to enhance civil society or the professionalism of parliament assistants can actually be translated into numbers. Too often the realities on the ground seem too complex to be represented in a set of digits.

This problem is illustrated by a short case study on the TACIS program, which attempts to support decentralization in the Kyrgyz Republic. Even though the project must be considered a failure, when realities on the ground change too rapidly and in an unfavorable direction, the organization's final report mentions mostly successes by counting the numbers of workshops held, trainings conducted, papers produced and equipment distributed. The form of information aggregation assists in the obscuration of realities and allows for the undetectability of project failure.

The second mode of control discussed in the paper is the economic mode of control. Organizations implementing development aid are forced to survive in a market environment in which the competition for grant money from donor organizations is strong. No contractor can afford to fail in its activities, since such failure would damage the organization's reputation and result in exclusion from subsequent calls for tendering. This pressure translates into the necessity to produce success stories; if not in reality, then at least on paper. Cooley and Ron analyze the impact of market conditions on bargaining between contractors and partner organizations in recipient societies.<sup>2</sup> Market conditions plus the multiplicity of principal contractors and only few capable recipient partner organizations (agents) lead to a distorted bargaining game. The partners are in the position to dictate conditions and to handpick the contractor out of a number of organizations. The contractors (principals) on the other hand are forced to deviate from the project's objectives and forced to undermine the project's goals for the sake of winning a partner (with particularistic interests), since without his cooperation a successful project implementation is impossible. In the end, market forces,

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1 Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad. The Learning Curve* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), Washington, DC, 1999, pp. 287–297.

2 Alexander Cooley and James Ron, *The NGO Scramble. Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transitional Action*, in: *International Security* 1/2002, pp. 5–39.

promoted with the aim to enhance organizational effectiveness in the sphere of development aid, lead to distortions in the process of project implementation.

At the same time, the realities on the ground are obscured. There is an apparent paradox within the development discourse and its significance for practices of development aid. Rottenburg<sup>3</sup> describes an unavoidable contradiction between a modern and a postmodern element in the discourse on development. The modern element introduces an inequality between a developed and a developing part of the world. In contrast to such inequality, a postmodern element calls for equal representation in a setting of cultural heterogeneity. Cultural self-determination demands self-determined development which means that the recipients know best for themselves if and how to develop. However, although development semantics have taken notice of this change of perspective and introduced concepts of cooperation and partnership, the contradiction nevertheless remains. Only if notions of inequality are introduced, we are able to identify “developed” knowledge and transfer it from one place to another. In the end, the modern element in development discourse determines the frame for development cooperation and thus undermines the principle of equal representation.

This seemingly unavoidable paradox presents the main challenge to effective development cooperation: if clear guidance for development cooperation is inhib-

3 Richard Rottenburg, *Weit hergeholte Fakten. Eine Parabel der Entwicklungshilfe*, Stuttgart 2002, pp. 217–241.



Alexander Wolters analyzing paradoxes in the current development practices

ed and if introduced mechanisms for control do not result in increased effectiveness, what can be done to improve development-aid and democracy promotion? Rottenburg, accepting the limits for improvement caused by what he calls the technical game (the materialization of the modern element), calls for more room for communicative maneuvering, for more integration of heterogeneous perspectives into the homogeneously structured technical game. Negotiations between representatives of different cultural backgrounds need more (communicative) space to allow for more adequate representation of cultural heterogeneity at the bargaining table.

In light of these problems, the idea of a public serves as a possible corrective mechanism. Conceptualized as a social system, the public might serve as an unlimited communicative space which allows for the unconditional initiation of communication. Since the system's own structures decide which communication to continue, no guarantee is given for the success of initiated communication. However, the opportunity for unconditional initiation of communication exists and is worth further consideration. A key question concerns the interplay between the corrective mechanisms and the two modes of control. Certainly, the public's function to structure free flows of communication runs counter to the rather information sensitive operations of market or administrative organizations. Public attention paid to such operations is considered to be disturbing by these organizations. However, public attention, i. e. communication about organizations' activities, does not automatically bring operations to a standstill. In fact, organizations tend to react to such disturbances by developing new strategies of public relations or, in the case of market organizations/businesses, new concepts of corporate social responsibility. The contradictory moment between the two modes of control and the public, as a possible third mode of control, seems to be merely taking place on the level of operations, rather than being a systemic contradiction.

The public could hence function as a possible corrective mechanism that allows for enhanced maneuvering and more equal representation and integration of heterogeneous cultural perceptions within the development discourse and its outcome in form of strategy formulation and program development. Radicalizing Rottenburg's idea about necessary room for maneuvering at the bargaining table the public here is conceived as an alternative mode of control that, systematically and according to its own logic, negotiates culturally divergent perceptions of social reality.

Public engagement within the sphere of development cooperation can take various forms. Kyrgyzstan as an example clearly illustrates the limits of today's public engagement of development-aid organizations and other relevant actors. In Kyrgyzstan, public information on development aid is often provided unidirectional, with no possibility for reaction and no dialogue launched. Besides being scarce, information is usually only available in English. Hardly ever is information provided in Russian, let alone in the Kyrgyz language. Another specific problem is the fact that information is mostly provided on results and rarely on processes of project implementation. Last but not least, development aid projects lack public memory. Upon completion of a project data referring to its existence seem to get lost and disappear, one prominent example being a project of the National Democratic Institute in Kyrgyzstan. A series of TV-debates was organized throughout 2006 and 2007, where one representative from the government discussed issues of public political interest with a representative from the opposition. Although the debates have been recorded no subsequent archival storage was undertaken and most of the content of the debates and information on the project itself was lost or is no longer available.

What can be done to improve this situation? And what are ways to initiate public communication for better representation of cultural heterogeneity? What certainly needs to be done is the organization of real platforms for exchange. Be they internet-based (e.g. project blogs), in form of conferences and symposiums or workshops, what is important is the unconditional get-together of participants and observers of development aid to negotiate terms of cooperation and thus cultural terms of social perception. Carothers recommends to increase the efforts for participatory evaluation and participatory observation studies in regard to democracy promotion programs. In addition, the information generated with the help of such studies should be made available for all actors in the sphere of development cooperation, not only strategy experts in Western development bank headquarters. Finally, public memories must be established where data regarding past projects is preserved. Information from former projects must be made available and be taken into account in ongoing strategy considerations for the purpose of increased reflection. Otherwise, the reproduction of project failure will continue.

To improve the effectiveness of development aid and democracy promotion, initiatives should capitalize on the unparalleled opportunity of communication provided by the public with all possible means and available creative potential. However, the public is often understood as an outcome of democracy promotion. How, then, is it possible to utilize the public as a corrective mechanism, when

open societies are perceived to be absent in most of the states, where democracy promoting activities take place? To answer this question the systemic character of the public needs to be taken into account. In systems theory notions of the public refer to a global social system which structures communication according to a code that differentiates into actual / non-actual. This understanding is rather unpolitical and does not refer to the public as a politically contested communicative space. Such space is usually referred to as public opinion, the structural link between the two systems, the public and the political one. Most democracy promoting projects try to open up public space for different political opinions. In distinction from that, the idea of a social system presented here aims at a more fundamental understanding of the public where attention is directed according to actual needs (issues of public concern), which are not necessarily political issues. As such, the public might serve as a (not necessarily politicized) platform for the exchange and negotiation of heterogeneous modes of cultural perception. The results of such negotiation might serve as a precondition for the successful implementation of democracy promoting projects that aim at securing equal representation of different political opinions in less democratic countries.

## What Went Wrong with Democracy Promotion in Kyrgyzstan?

*Janyl Bokonbaeva*

While greatly assisting the popular opposition movement before, during and immediately after the March 2005 regime change in Kyrgyzstan, U.S. democracy aid has since been not as pro-active, lucid and continuous as it could have been. The ousting of president Askar Akayev has likewise signaled an end to any significant U.S. democratization efforts—and although governance funding is still large as compared to other areas, it does no longer constitute a decent match for the current and future challenges in the Kyrgyz political process.

A serious limitation of the U.S.-American democratization policy has been too much focus on civil society development at the expense of institutional capacity building—i. e. disproportions in areas of priority. An immense flow of attention and funding into NGOs has alienated many ordinary citizens and government officials who felt underprivileged, jealous and, therefore, suspicious about the entire enterprise. NGOs' reaction to this kind of sentiments was understandably negative, fuelling a cycle of mutual mistrust and accusations. Even with excellent programs of civil society support implemented between 1995 and 2000, examples of wrong planning and negligence for local factors abounded. Only a few viable advocacy NGOs have survived problems of sustainability up to this day. These NGOs are not strong political actors and will most probably fall under strict patronage of the state and individual politicians.

A. Musabaeva raises another important issue by underlining implications of a sudden shift in donor preferences from political mobilization groups to community-based organizations (CBOs) providing social services in the mid 1990s. According to this expert, the democratizing potential of such localized CBOs is very small. Interaction is mostly an intra-, not inter-group one, and issues at stake rarely involve actors from other levels. These interactions are therefore contained and limited to themselves—contributing, in a certain degree, to even more fragmentation within the Kyrgyz society. This argument is not indisputable, but gains credibility if one examines Kyrgyz NGOs' inability to participate meaningfully in the constitution drafting process in 2007.

Nonetheless, there is little possibility for a sustainable civil society to emerge in the absence of institutionalized democratic traditions, a strong and viable state and a robust corporate sector—or put differently, in a climate of endemic cor-



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ruption and profound economic difficulties in Kyrgyzstan. Indeed, NGOs must not be viewed as operating in a separate universe, free of any outside influences. This misperception is exactly what Thomas Carothers warns about and what many democracy promoters have unwillingly fallen into. Focusing exclusively on civil society organizations and paying only minor attention to the state apparatus is a strategy doomed to fail.

The bottom-up approach has long been a trademark of American democratization efforts, which has indeed worked in many cases, including Kyrgyzstan—to a certain extent. Nevertheless, common sense demands that the two approaches—bottom-up and top-down—be complementary to each other and carried out simultaneously. In the Kyrgyz case, however, disproportions have been glaring.

As regards the top-down approach, American efforts have been largely inefficient. Changing institutional behavior and bringing about structural change is a daunting task, but promises more success in terms of sustainability and irreversibility of democratic transformation. So far, not many democracy promoters (less so Washington authorities) have been cognizant of the untidy and gloomy underworld of Kyrgyz politics, where most of the actual decision-making and alliance forging is done. Blithe reliance on formal rules and over-confidential treatment of official commitments have led many to disappointment over the reality of political processes.

Of course, no aid regardless of its scale can bring about fundamental change to legal and executive systems in transition countries—but sober realization of this is exactly what caused disappointment and even reluctance on the part of the public. Seeing the ways in which many good-willed initiatives “glided on the surface” of troubled waters (or even contributed, as some think, to malevolent practices) made many doubt any real effect of the American assistance. As told by a 38-year-old Kyrgyz housewife, “Americans give computers to judges, but these judges still keep on extorting money from ordinary people like us for ruling favorably on our cases.”

Public policy initiatives conducted under the auspices of various democratization projects often missed the mark. Politicians would eagerly pay lip service to the necessity of “open and transparent” negotiations—such rhetoric indeed would go down very well among the donors. Meanwhile, the skeptical public would watch sweeping promises fly by even as behind-the-scenes deals were struck. It is therefore evident, that even when the top-down approach to democratization was undertaken, its scope was insufficient and its reach limited. If attempts were ever



carried out to engage Kyrgyz leaders into behaving democratically on a sustainable and principled basis, then these attempts have not borne fruit yet.

This account seems critical; however, one thing is to be underlined. If democracy did not take root in Kyrgyzstan, it is because of the weakness of the state, not failures of democratization measures. Overall, Kyrgyzstan has not had the capacity to cope with overwhelming democracy challenges, because the country lacked basic democracy preconditions from the start. What opportunities were there came to be dispersed and overborne by economic hardships, pervasive corruption and political instability. Although political dynamics are in some cases showing positive signs, persisting insecurity leads to mass migration, criminalization, growth of shadow economy and political apathy—all of it undermining what little has been left of the pledge for democracy.

In conclusion, it has to be emphasized that U.S.-American democracy promotion has been invaluable in making Kyrgyzstan a more open and pluralistic country. Still, democracy assistance shortcomings have been many, and not limited to technical or implementation aspects. Uneven funding, under-aiding state institutions, but mostly inconsistencies in following the democratization tracks have all discredited the policy. The appeal was lost, and so grew resentment and disbelief among the broader recipient society. The majority of ordinary Kyrgyz associate democracy with anarchy, rule of the rich, corruption and political instability. In



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such circumstances, democracy does not have the power of an essential value and a worthy ideal, and is becoming a shallow concept indeed.

This is not an unfamiliar picture to those engaged in democracy promotion around the globe, and the same conditions are probably manifest in many other Asian, African and/or East European countries. Surprising is the slowness and resistance with which the upper decision-making layer in the U.S. administration reacts to all-too-evident calls for change—and fails to learn from mistakes.

Overall, U.S.-American interest in promoting democracy in Kyrgyzstan is already insignificant and will most likely decrease. With other external actors unable and/or unwilling to pursue a vigorous democratization policy, we witness a failure of the democracy promise in Kyrgyzstan.

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